DIGGLE • RUBINE • ANGULO

THE EXPANSE

DRAGON TOOTH

VOLUME ONE

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THE EXPANSE™

DRAGON TOOTH

VOLUME ONE

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DRAGON TOOTH

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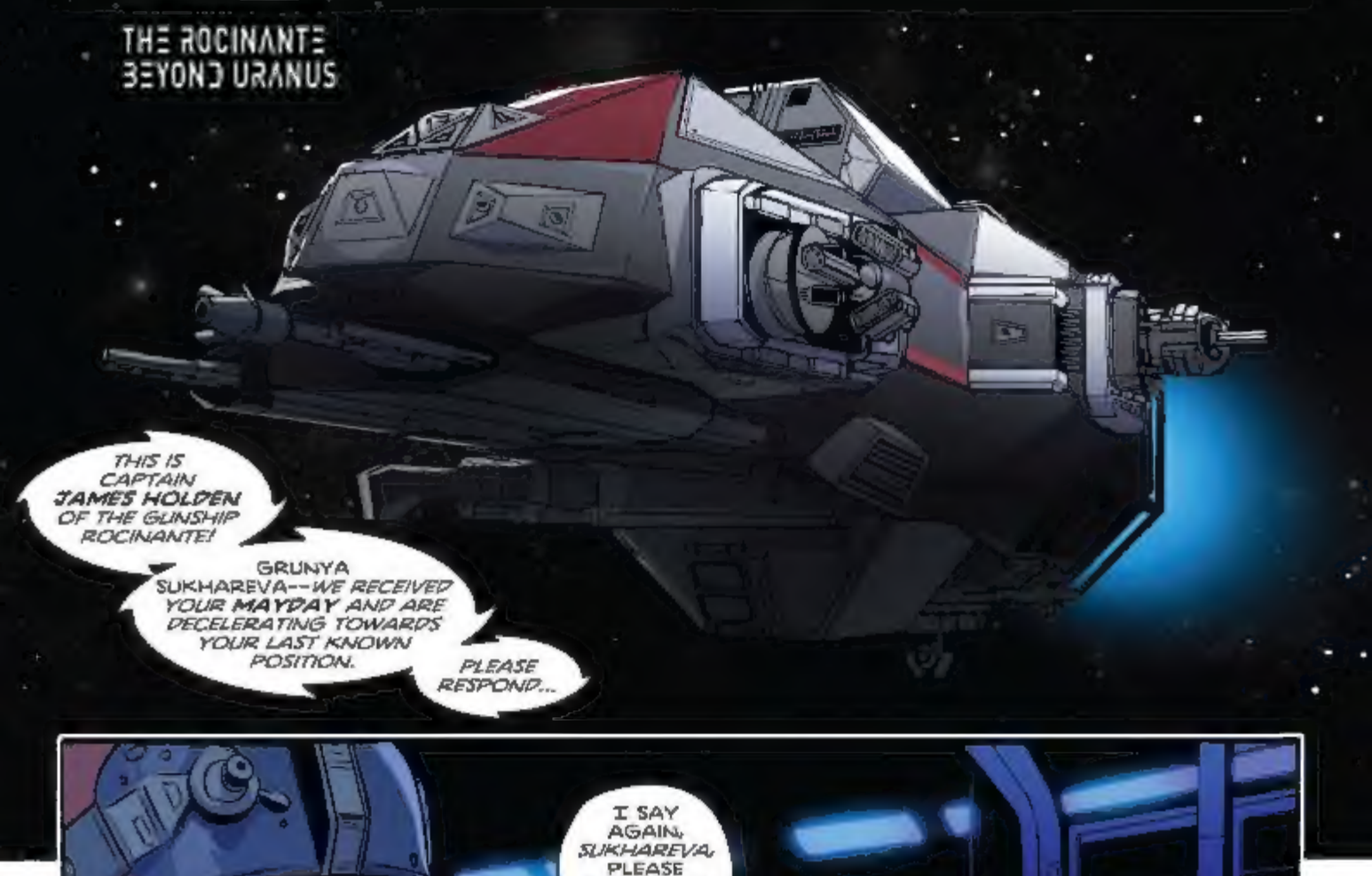
CHAPTER ONE

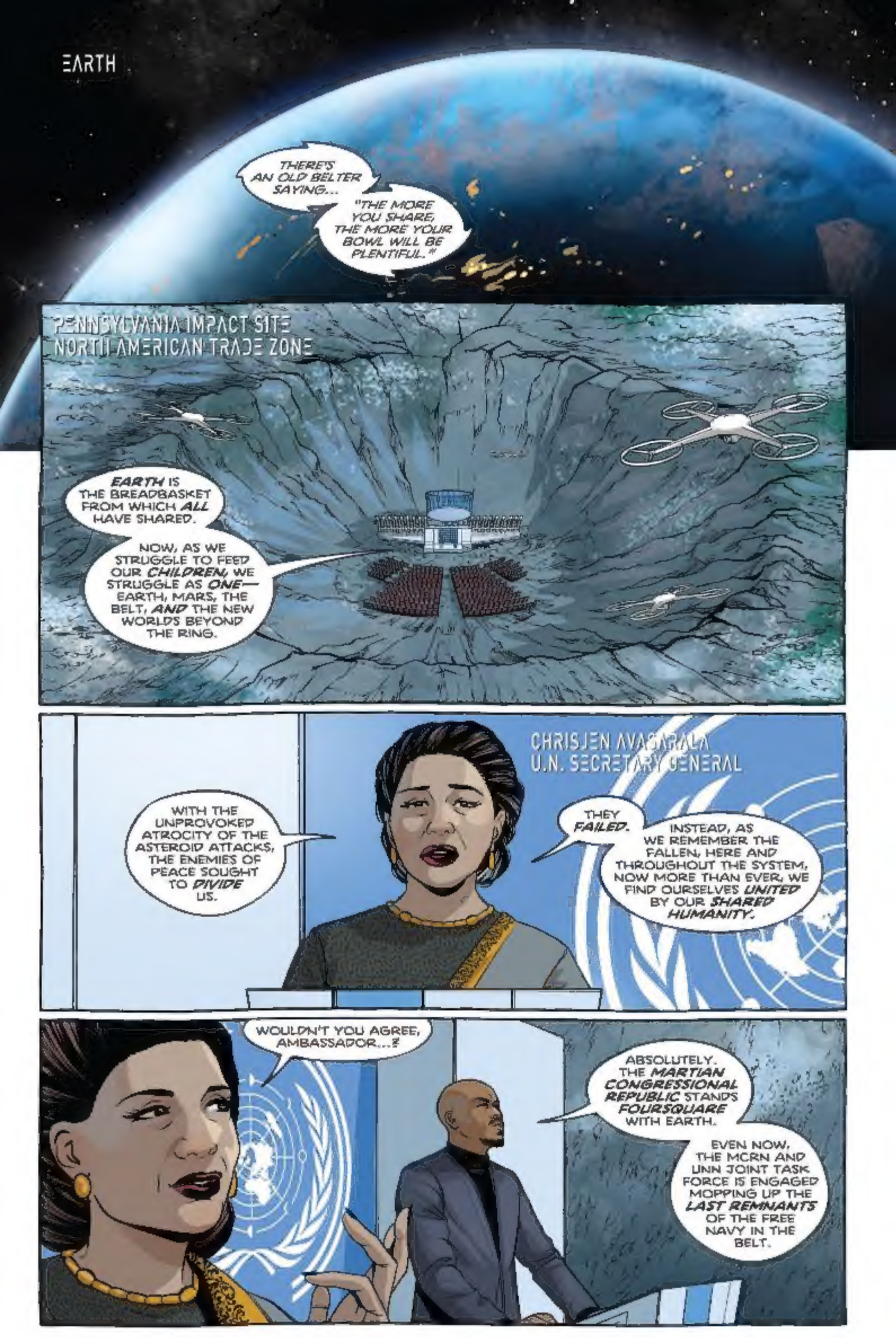
"ON SERIOUS GROUND, GATHER IN PLUNDER."
- SUN TZU, THE ART OF WAR



HEADS UP, I'VE GOT SOMETHING ON LADAR.
A LOT OF SOMETHINGS...
NAOMI NAGATA
EXECUTIVE OFFICER / CHIEF ENGINEER
FUCK.
WE'RE TOO LATE...
...AGAIN.

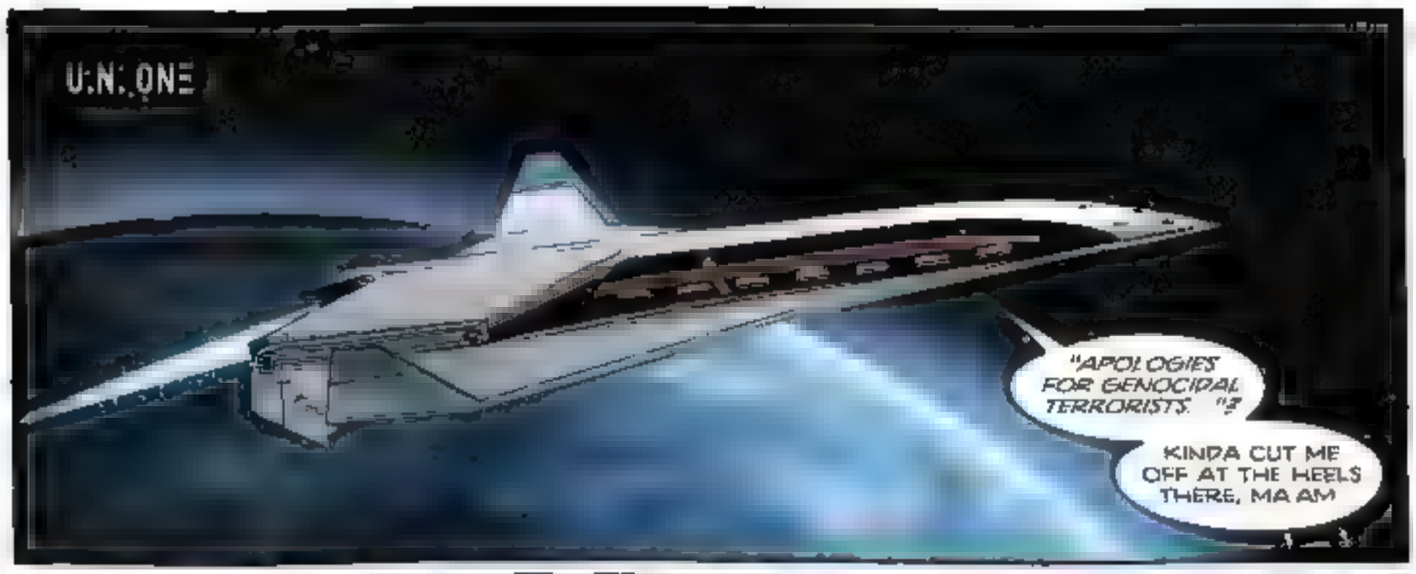
GOD DAMN IT.
NOTHING ELSE OUT HERE FOR A MILLION KLICKS.
WHOEVER DID THIS, THEY'RE HELL AND GONE.
HOW DOES THIS MAKE ANY SENSE?
THE WHOLE SYSTEM IS STARVING. THE SUKHAREVA WAS CARRYING LIVE SOIL. WHY DESTROY IT...?
PIRATES ARE SORE LOSERS.
SOHIRO PROBABLY FIGURED IT FOR A COLONY TRANSPORT HEADING FOR THE RING. STRUCK OUT, DIDN'T WANT TO LEAVE ANY WITNESSES.
WE'LL FIND THE SON OF A BITCH.
I DON'T CARE HOW LONG IT TAKES.

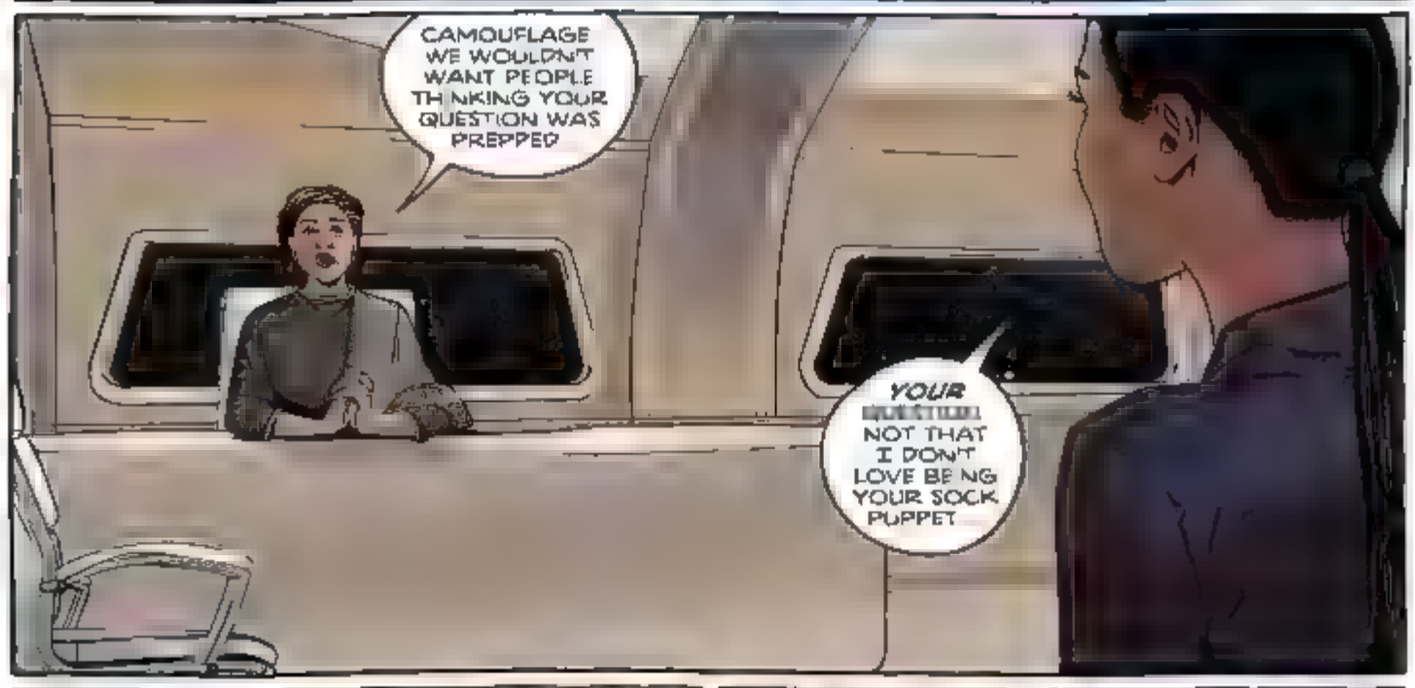
HARD AS IT SOUNDS, CHANCES ARE WE DODGED A BULLET.
WE'RE DOWN TO FOUR TORPEDOES. PDC'S ARE AT THIRTY PERCENT, AND WE'RE CLOSE TO RED LINE ON REACTION MASS.
SOHIRO MAY BE A SOCIOPATH, BUT HE KNOWS THIS GHOST KNIFE SHIT.
IF WE'RE GOING HEAD TO HEAD, I'D RATHER BE FULLY LOADED AND TEETH OUT.
YOU'RE RIGHT. WE'LL CHECK FOR SURVIVORS, AND LOG THE WRECK.
ONCE WE'RE DONE HERE, YOU CAN PLOT US A BURN TO MEDINA.
ROGER THAT.
ALEX FIRST THOUGH, RIGHT?
...RIGHT. I HADN'T REALIZED.
THAT WAS A YEAR?
WE'VE BEEN OUT HERE A WHILE.


EARTH
THERE'S AN OLD BELTER SAYING...
"THE MORE YOU SHARE, THE MORE YOUR BOWL WILL BE PLENTIFUL."
PENNSYLVANIA IMPACT SITE
NORTH AMERICAN TRADE ZONE
EARTH IS THE BREADBASKET FROM WHICH ALL HAVE SHARED.
NOW, AS WE STRUGGLE TO FEED OUR CHILDREN, WE STRUGGLE AS ONE— EARTH, MARS, THE BELT, AND THE NEW WORLDS BEYOND THE RING.
CHRISJEN AVASARALA
U.N. SECRETARY GENERAL
WITH THE UNPROVOKED ATROCITY OF THE ASTEROID ATTACKS, THE ENEMIES OF PEACE SOUGHT TO DIVIDE US.
THEY FAILED.
INSTEAD, AS WE REMEMBER THE FALLEN, HERE AND THROUGHOUT THE SYSTEM, NOW MORE THAN EVER, WE FIND OURSELVES UNITED BY OUR SHARED HUMANITY.
WOULDN'T YOU AGREE, AMBASSADOR...?
ABSOLUTELY. THE MARTIAN CONGRESSIONAL REPUBLIC STANDS FOURSQUARE WITH EARTH.
EVEN NOW, THE MCRN AND UNN JOINT TASK FORCE IS ENGAGED MOPPING UP THE LAST REMNANTS OF THE FREE NAVY IN THE BELT.

MADAM SECRETARY GENERAL, AMBASSADOR. THIS IS ALL...LOVELY AND INSPIRING AND WHATNOT. BUT PEOPLE WANT TO KNOW--HOW DID IT COME TO THIS?
THE RESOURCES YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT WERE WITHHELD FROM BELTERS FOR GENERATIONS.
MONICA STUART
INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALIST
MISS STUART, I BELIEVE THAT EVEN THE MOST EVEN-HANDED OF OBSERVERS MIGHT HESITATE BEFORE CHOOSING TO OFFER APOLOGIES FOR GENOCIDAL TERRORISTS.
...WOW. NO.
I'M JUST SAYING, MARCO INAROS COULDN'T HAVE DONE WHAT HE DID WITHOUT SUPPORT.
AND NOT JUST FROM THE BELT.
MARTIAN STEALTH COMPOSITES, FOR EXAMPLE.
FULLY ONE THIRD OF THE MCRN FLEET DEFECTED ALONG WITH ADMIRAL DUARTE--
THE DEFECTORS ARE NOT MARTIANS.
THEY ARE TRAITORS.
NITED NATI
THE COWARDS THEY ARE, THEY FLED THROUGH THE LACONIA GATE BECAUSE THEY KNOW THE PENALTY FOR SEDITION.
THAT PENALTY IS DEATH.

I COULDN'T AGREE MORE, AMBASSADOR.
AND THAT IS WHY I INVITE MARS TO *JOIN* EARTH IN ESTABLISHING A BILATERAL *TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION,* TO STUDY AND LEARN FROM THE POLICY FAILURES OF PAST ADMINISTRATIONS
POISONED GROUND, FROM WHICH GREW THE SEEDS OF CONFLICT
UH—
WILL AN UNREDACTED REPORT BE MADE PUBLIC?
I WOULD HOPE TO SEE THE COMMISSION'S WORK CONDUCTED IN A SPIRIT OF FULL TRANSPARENCY— WITHIN THE BOUNDS OF PLANETARY SECURITY, OF COURSE.
AFTER ALL, EARTH AND MARS HAVE NOTHING TO HIDE...
DO THEY, AMBASSADOR?
OF— OF COURSE NOT.


U.N. ONE
"APOLOGIES FOR GENOCIDAL TERRORISTS. "?
KINDA CUT ME OFF AT THE HEELS THERE, MA AM


CAMOUFLAGE WE WOULDN'T WANT PEOPLE THINKING YOUR QUESTION WAS PREPPED
YOUR [redacted] NOT THAT I DON'T LOVE BEING YOUR SOCK PUPPET

IF THE BURDEN OF ACCESS IS PROVING TOO HEAVY, I'M SURE SOME OTHER ADMINISTRATION WOULD BE EAGER TO REAP THE BENEFITS OF YOUR JOURNALISTIC INSTINCTS.
CERES, PERHAPS

I'M GOOD
SO, DEEP BACKGROUND— WHY THE DOG AND PONY SHOW? WHAT'S YOUR REAL AGENDA WITH THIS TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION.. WHATEVER?

WINSTON DUARTE.
THE MAN WAS NO FOOL IS NO FOOL
A MASS DEFECTION IS NOT AN EASY TH NG TO PLAN, AND EVEN HARDER TO KEEP SECRET. YET WE'RE SUPPOSED TO BELIEVE NO ONE SAW IT COM.NG. ?
PLEASE
NOW THE JOINT CHIEFS ARE PROPOSING A COMBINED EARTH-MARS COALITION...
BUT ASK YOURSELF--MIGHT DUARTE HAVE SLEEPER AGENTS EMBEDDED IN THE MARTIAN FLEET, EVEN NOW?
DID ALL OF THEIR STOLEN SHIPS FLEE TO LACONIA?
OR ARE SOME OF THEM STILL HIDING IN OUR SYSTEM, BIDING THEIR TIME, WAITING TO STRIKE.. ?
HOLY SHIT
YOU TH NK IT'S NOT OVER YET
I CAN'T SEE DUARTE'S ENDGAME.
IT'S WHY I DON'T SLEEP ANYMORE

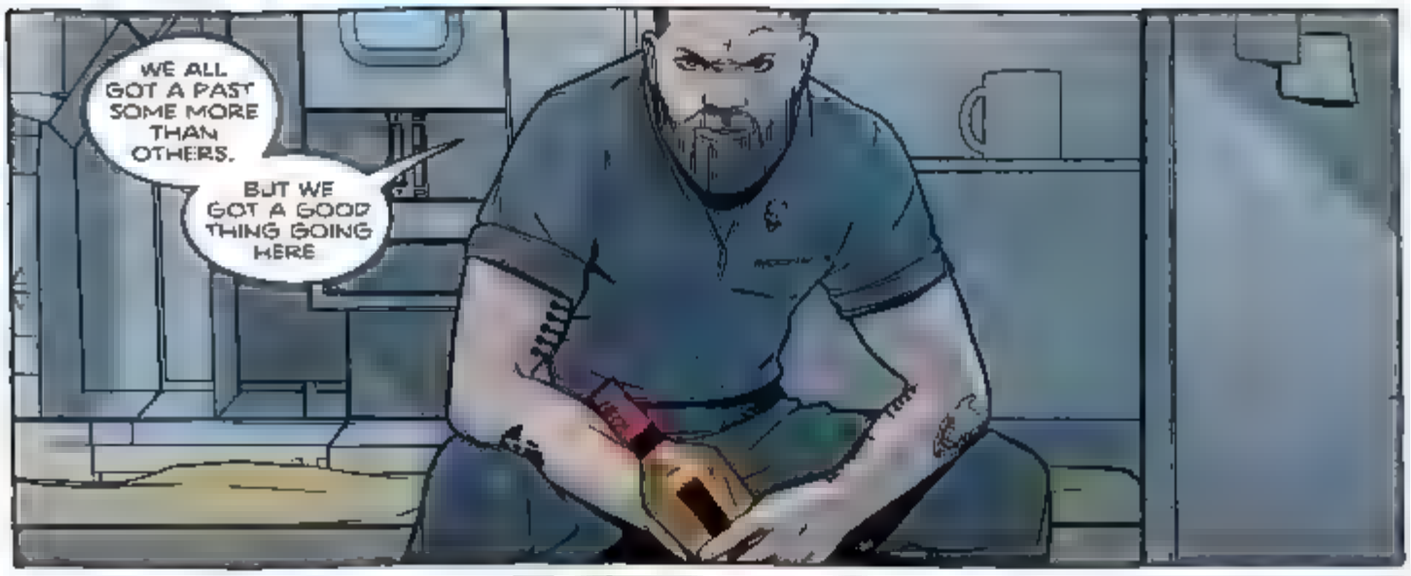
THE DRONE'S NOT PICKING UP ANY HEAT SIGNATURES NOTHING.
BASTARD VENTED THE SHIP
CERTAINLY FITS SOHIRO'S M.O.
I'VE BEEN THINKING ABOUT THAT
THE FILE ON SOHIRO'S PRETTY THIN, JUST RUMORS MOSTLY BUT THE NAME TRACKS BACK TO A GANGSTER FROM CERES.
HIS BROTHERS DIED WITH ASHFORD ON THE TYNAN SUPPOSEDLY HE DIED TOO..
. WORKING FOR CPM ON—HUH!
EROS.
SO EITHER HE FOUND A WAY OFF EROS -- I MEAN, WE KNOW THAT'S POSSIBLE
OR SOMEONE'S USING THE NAME OF A DEAD CRIME

SO THAT'S WHERE YOU BEEN HIDING.
YOU FOUND IT?
McGLENTON'S THE GOOD SHIT FORGOT I EVEN HAD IT
OUTSTANDING.
CAP FORGOT WHAT DAY IT IS.
CAP'S GOT A LOT ON HIS MIND
AMOS, BOBBIE IS, UH...?
PEACHES AIN'T COMIN'
ALL RIGHT THEN, WELL...

HERE'S TO YOU, ALEX.
YOU ALWAYS TRIED TO DO THE RIGHT THING, EVEN WHEN IT WAS HARD ESPECIALLY WHEN IT WAS HARD
YOU SAVED OUR LIVES MORE TIMES THAN I CAN COUNT, AND I'LL AWAYS BE GRATEFUL TO YOU FOR THAT
JUST, THANK YOU. AND ..
I'M SORRY
ROCNAN
YOUR MUSIC SUCKED AND YOUR BEANIE LOOKED STUPID. SORRY, I NEVER HAD THE HEART TO TELL YOU.
BUT YOU WERE ONE HELL OF A PILOT, AND I'M PROUD TO CALL YOU A FELLOW MARTIAN.
GOOD HUNTING, SAILOR.
KICK ASS, BROTHER.

ROCINANTE
AN INDEPENDENT SHIP
OWNED & OPERATED BY
JAMES HOLDEN · NAOMI NAGATA
ALEX KAMAL · AMOS BURTON
A LEGITIMATE SALVAGE
OKAY SO... YOU'VE PROBABLY NOTICED, WE'RE KINDA RUNNING ON EMPTY
THE OPA'S *GATAMANG FERONTE* IS HEADING OUT TO COVER FOR US, WHILE WE MAKE A RESUPPLY RUN TO MEDINA.
LET'S TAKE AN HOUR TO SECURE THE SHIP, THEN WE'LL RAISE THE BURN. ALL GOOD?
ON IT, CAP
I'LL GET THIS... SQUARED AWAY

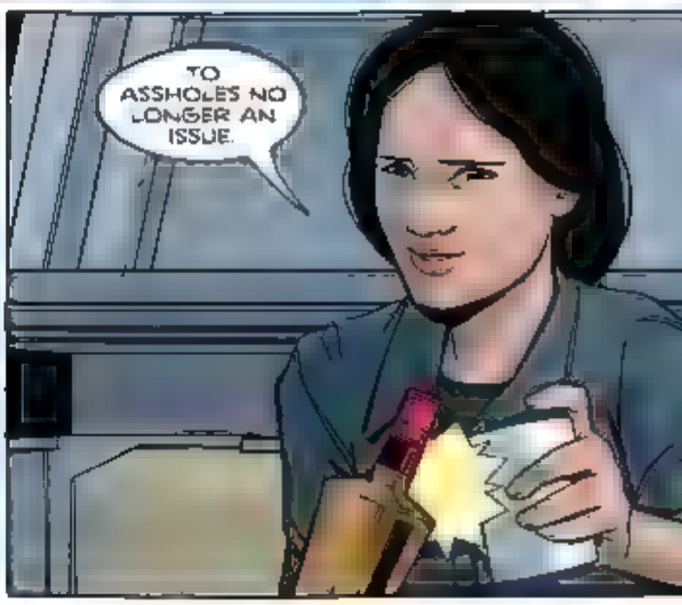
HOW WAS IT?
THE USUAL.
CAP WAS ASKIN' AFTER YOU.
ROCINANTE
CLARISSA MAO
APPRENTICE MECHANIC
IT WOULDN'T HAVE FELT APPROPRIATE. ME BEING THERE. I DON'T KNOW
S'ALL GOOD NEXT TIME. MAYBE
MAYBE.
LISTEN, PEACHES, THEY DON'T GET IT NEVER WILL BUT I DO.
THIS SHIT YOU'RE CARRYIN' AROUND? LADY I MET ONE TIME, SHE SAID—"HATE'S A BURDEN."
I'M GUESSIN' IT WORKS FOR GUILT, TOO. POINT BEING, YOU CAN DROP IT.
I DON'T KNOW THAT I SHOULD


WE ALL GOT A PAST SOME MORE THAN OTHERS.
BUT WE GOT A GOOD THING GOING HERE

I KNOW, AND I'M GRATEFUL. I *AM*. I JUST—
I KEEP PLAYING IT ALL BACK IN MY HEAD TRYING TO FIGURE OUT THE EXACT *MOMENT* I STEPPED ONTO THE ROAD TO—
Y'KNOW JUST THE WRONG PATH.
BUT I CAN'T THERE'S TOO MUCH ALL THE WAY BACK.

THERE'S A POEM I READ ONCE. WELL MY SHRINK READ IT TO ME. IN PRISON.
"THEY FUCK YOU UP, YOUR MUM AND DAD THEY DON'T MEAN TO, BUT THEY DO..."

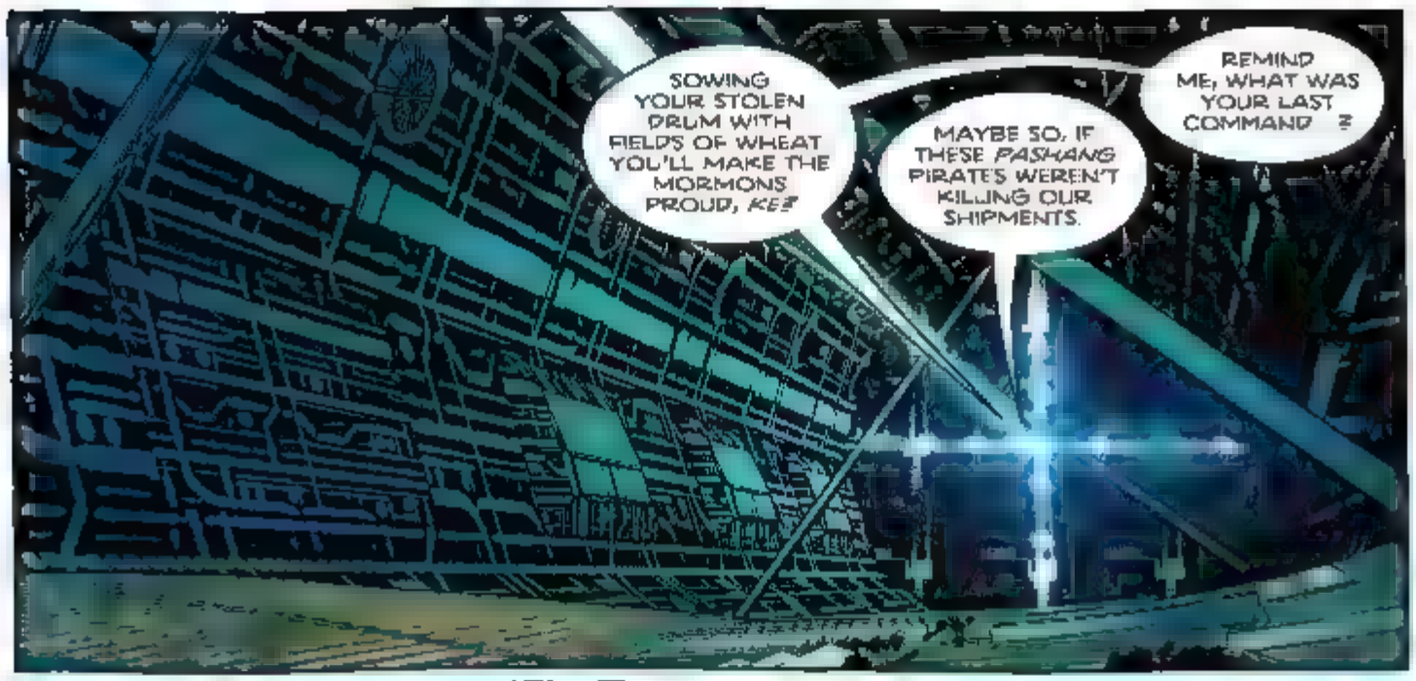
YOUR DAD WAS AN *ASSHOLE*.
FUCK IT HE AIN'T AN ISSUE ANYMORE.
ROCINANTE


TO ASSHOLES NO LONGER AN ISSUE.

THIS ONE'S YOU THOUGH, RIGHT?
"I HAVE KILLED, BUT I'M NOT A KILLER.."
"BECAUSE A KILLER IS A MONSTER, AND MONSTERS AREN'T AFRAID."
I'M AFRAID ALL THE TIME
OF ME?
WHAT? NO—
SEE, I THOUGHT ABOUT WHAT YOU SAID BACK IN THE FOREST
THING IS... I HAVEN'T BEEN AFRAID SINCE I WAS FIVE YEARS OLD
AMOS, DO YOU—?
I DON'T THINK YOU'RE A MONSTER. I DON'T.

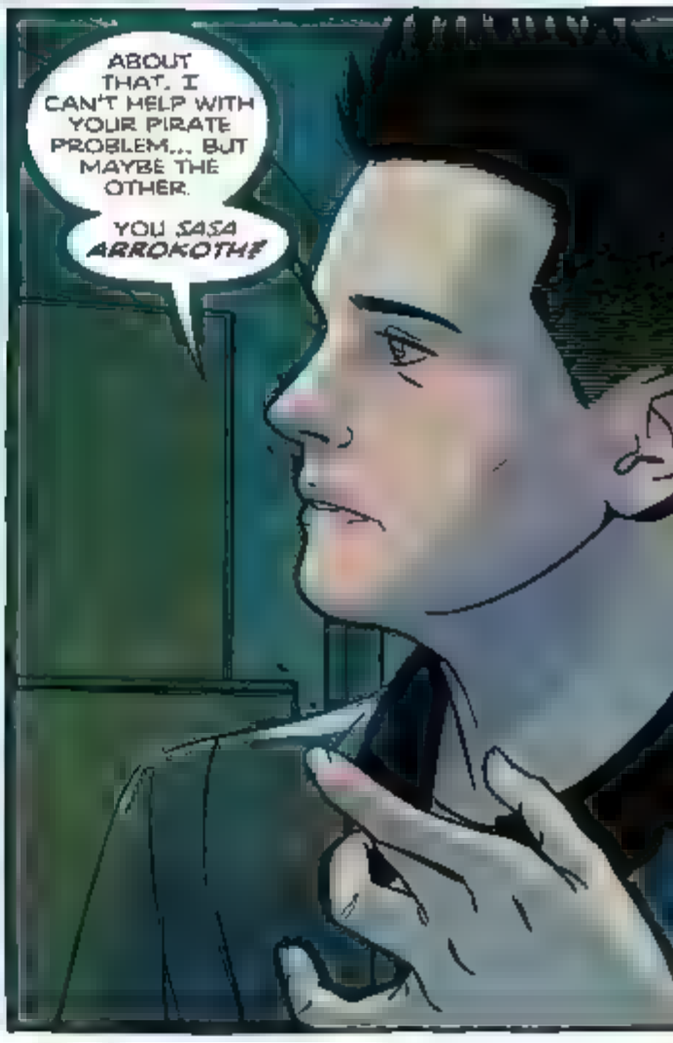
WOULDN'T BE THE FIRST
WAIT, PLEASE—
GOTTA GO.
SHIT TO DO
NO, NO, NO—!
NO BREATHE
BREATHE
REN HAZUK.
MARCEL GARRETT
ALINA DESOTO
TILLY FAGIN.

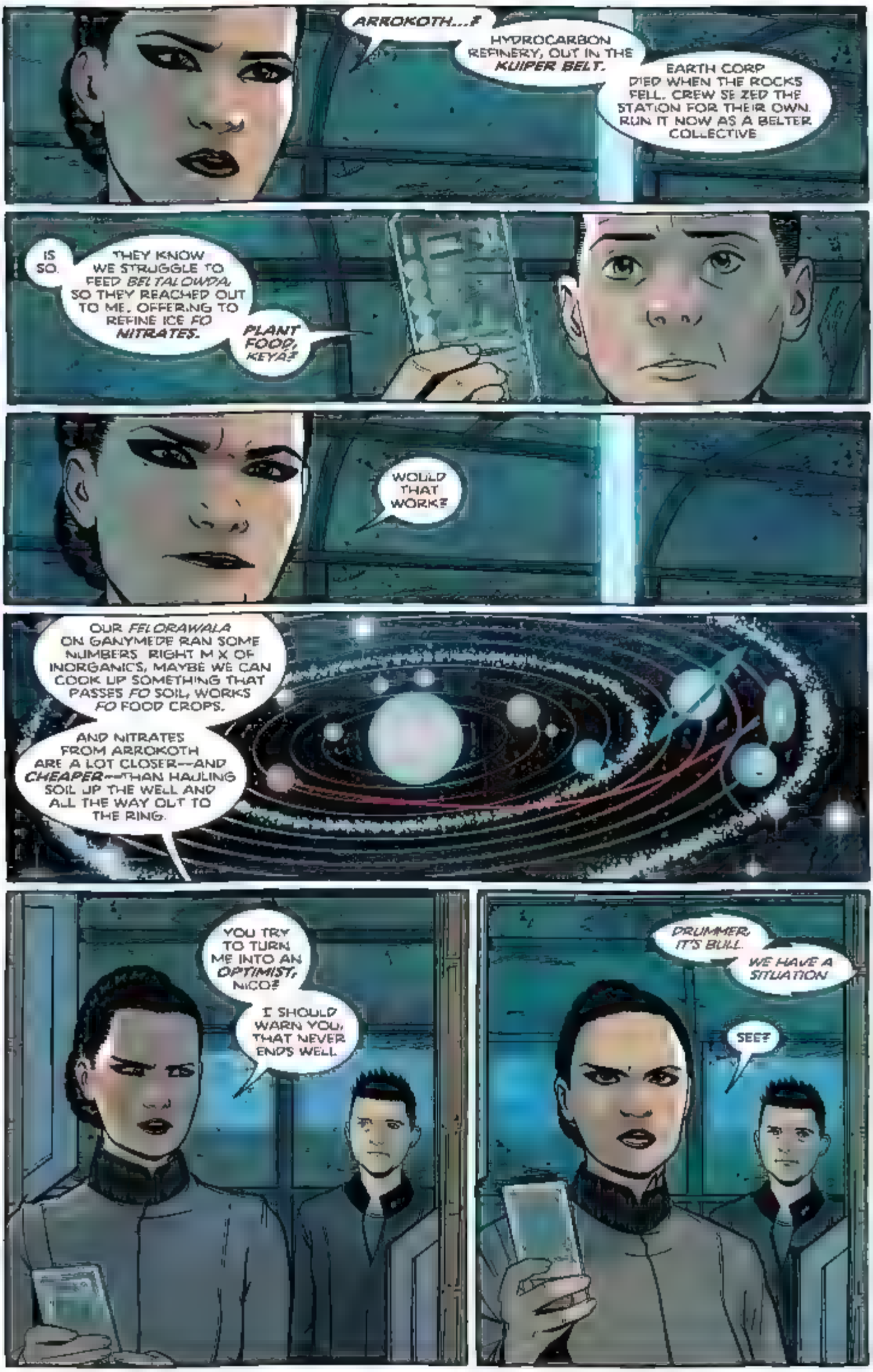
MEDINA STATION
IN THE RING SPACE
PASSENGER FERRY JAOLONG OUT OF CERES NOW DISEMBARK, BERTH NINE.
I CUT THE HONOR GUARD BUDGET YOU KNOW HOW IT GO.
WELCOME TO MEDINA.
CAMINA DRUMMER
NICO SANJRANI
OYE, CAMINA. POWER FITS YOU WELL, I SEE
WHAT IS IT THE INNERS SAY? "POISON CHALICE?"
HEH! YOU WANT, YOU CAN HAVE YOUR OLD JOB BACK AT CERES DOCK.
I KNOW SOME PEOPLE PULL A FEW STRINGS.
IT IS GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN, NICO.
WE'VE COME A LONG WAY, IT'S TRUE
BUT I NEVER SIGNED UP TO BE A FARMER.
DESTINATION, DRUM LEVEL ONE
SECURE FOR SPIN GRAVITY


SOWING YOUR STOLEN DRUM WITH FIELDS OF WHEAT YOU'LL MAKE THE MORMONS PROUD, KEE
MAYBE SO. IF THESE PASHANG PIRATES WEREN'T KILLING OUR SHIPMENTS.
REMIND ME, WHAT WAS YOUR LAST COMMAND ?

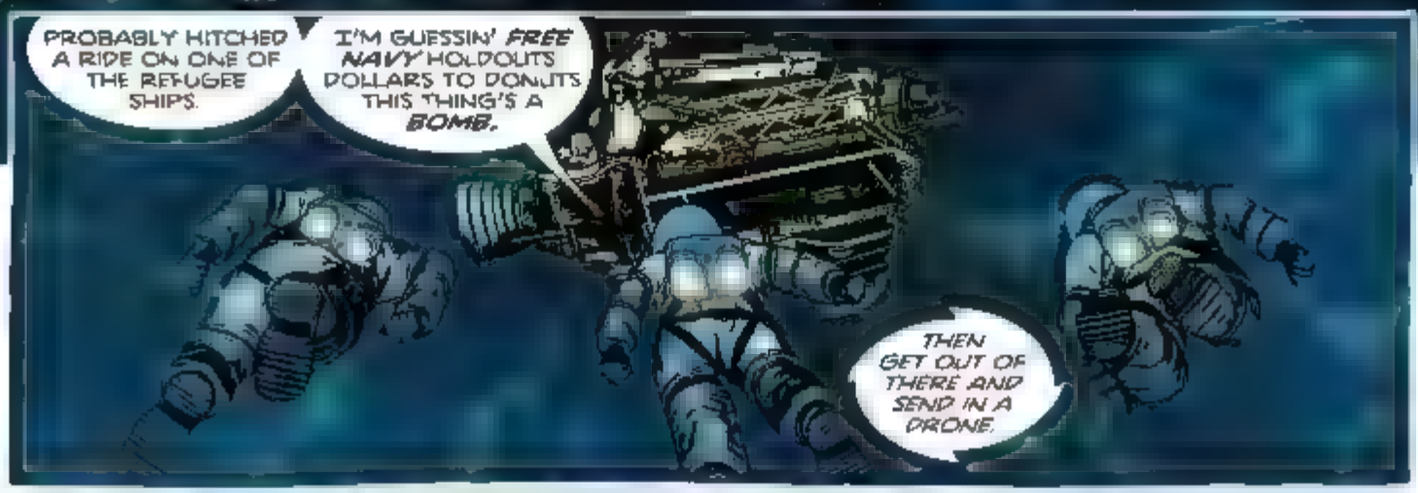
I TURNED PIRATE TO FEED THE BELT YOU KNOW THAT
NOW WE HAVE THIRTEEN HUNDRED NEW COLONIES, AND ALL OF THEM PISS IN MY EAR ABOUT FOOD

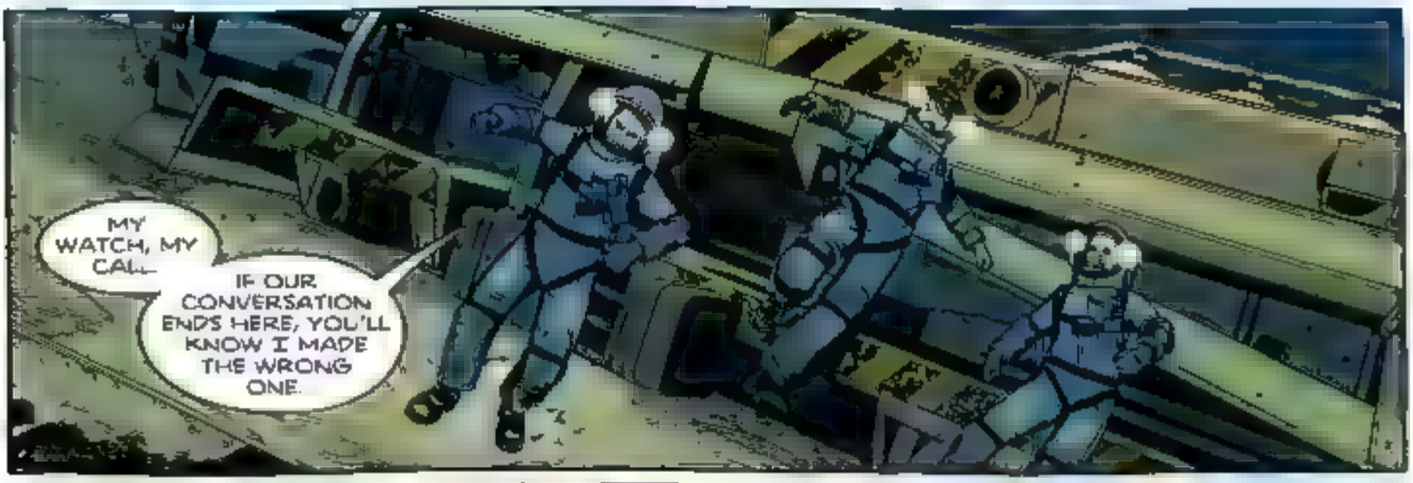
EARTH IS THE ONLY SOURCE OF LIVE SOIL, ORGANIC SUBSTRATES. BUT THE INNERS WON'T LIFT A FINGER TO HELP
EVEN WHEN THEIR OWN PEOPLE DIE ON THOSE TRANSPORTS.


ABOUT THAT. I CAN'T HELP WITH YOUR PIRATE PROBLEM... BUT MAYBE THE OTHER.
YOU SASA ARROKOTH?


ARROKOTH...?
HYDROCARBON REFINERY, OUT IN THE KUIPER BELT.
EARTH CORP DIED WHEN THE ROCKS FELL. CREW SEIZED THE STATION FOR THEIR OWN. RUN IT NOW AS A BELTER COLLECTIVE
IS SO.
THEY KNOW WE STRUGGLE TO FEED BELTALOWDA, SO THEY REACHED OUT TO ME, OFFERING TO REFINE ICE FO NITRATES.
PLANT FOOD, KEYA?
WOULD THAT WORK?
OUR FELORAWALA ON GANYMEDE RAN SOME NUMBERS. RIGHT MIX OF INORGANICS, MAYBE WE CAN COOK UP SOMETHING THAT PASSES FO SOIL, WORKS FO FOOD CROPS.
AND NITRATES FROM ARROKOTH ARE A LOT CLOSER—AND CHEAPER—THAN HAULING SOIL UP THE WELL AND ALL THE WAY OUT TO THE RING.
YOU TRY TO TURN ME INTO AN OPTIMIST, NICO?
I SHOULD WARN YOU, THAT NEVER ENDS WELL.
DRUMMER, IT'S BULL.
WE HAVE A SITUATION
SEE?

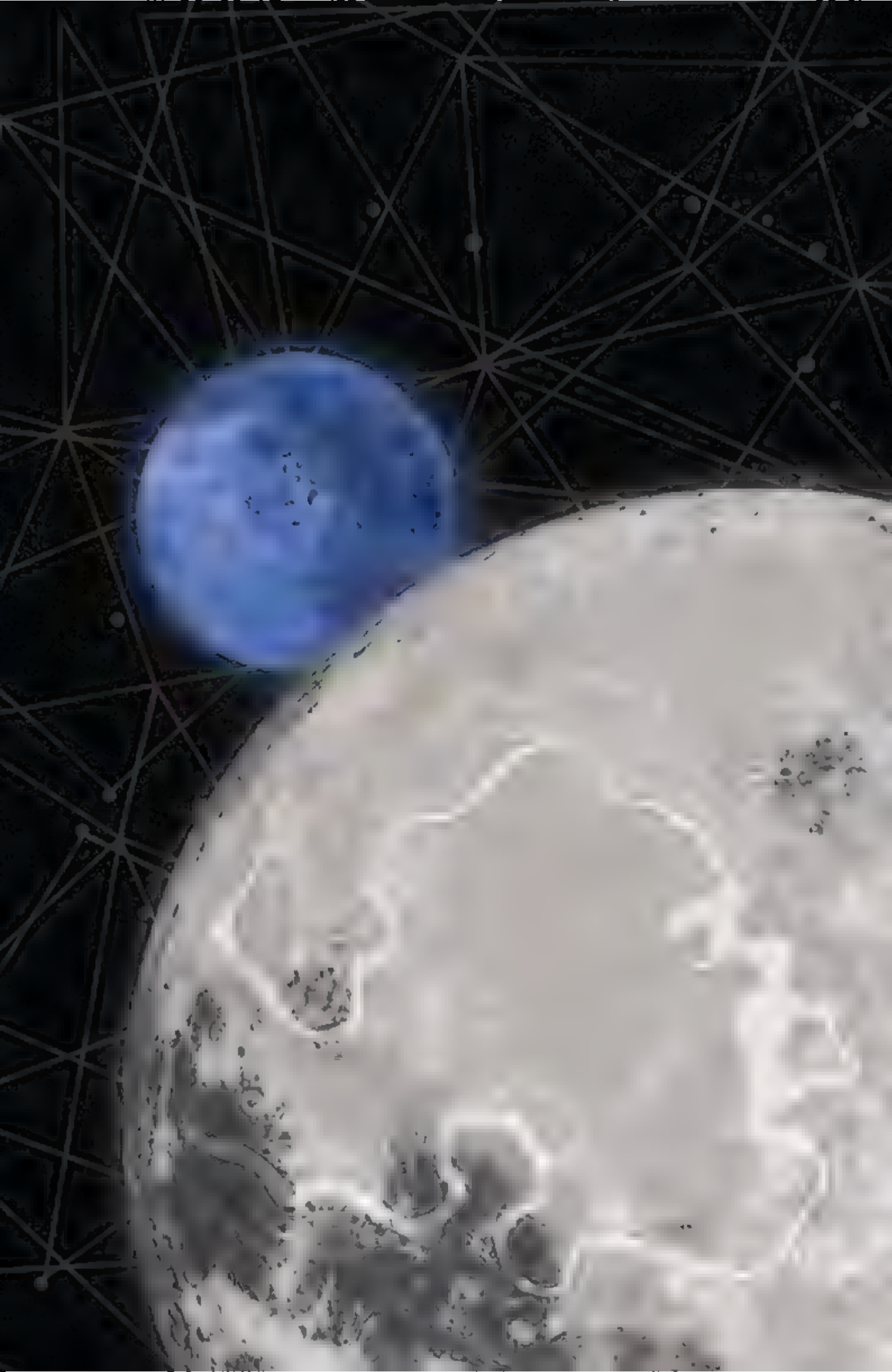
CARLOS "BULL" DE SACA
HEAD OF SECURITY, MEDINA STATION
TRAFFIC CONTROL PICKED UP AN UNREGISTERED SKIFF ON THE FLOAT
MCRN. NO TRANSPONDER
MCRN? HOW DID IT GET OUT HERE?


PROBABLY HITCHED A RIDE ON ONE OF THE REFUGEE SHIPS.
I'M GUESSIN' FREE NAVY HOLDOUTS DOLLARS TO DONUTS THIS THING'S A BOMB.
THEN GET OUT OF THERE AND SEND IN A DRONE.


MY WATCH, MY CALL.
IF OUR CONVERSATION ENDS HERE, YOU'LL KNOW I MADE THE WRONG ONE.

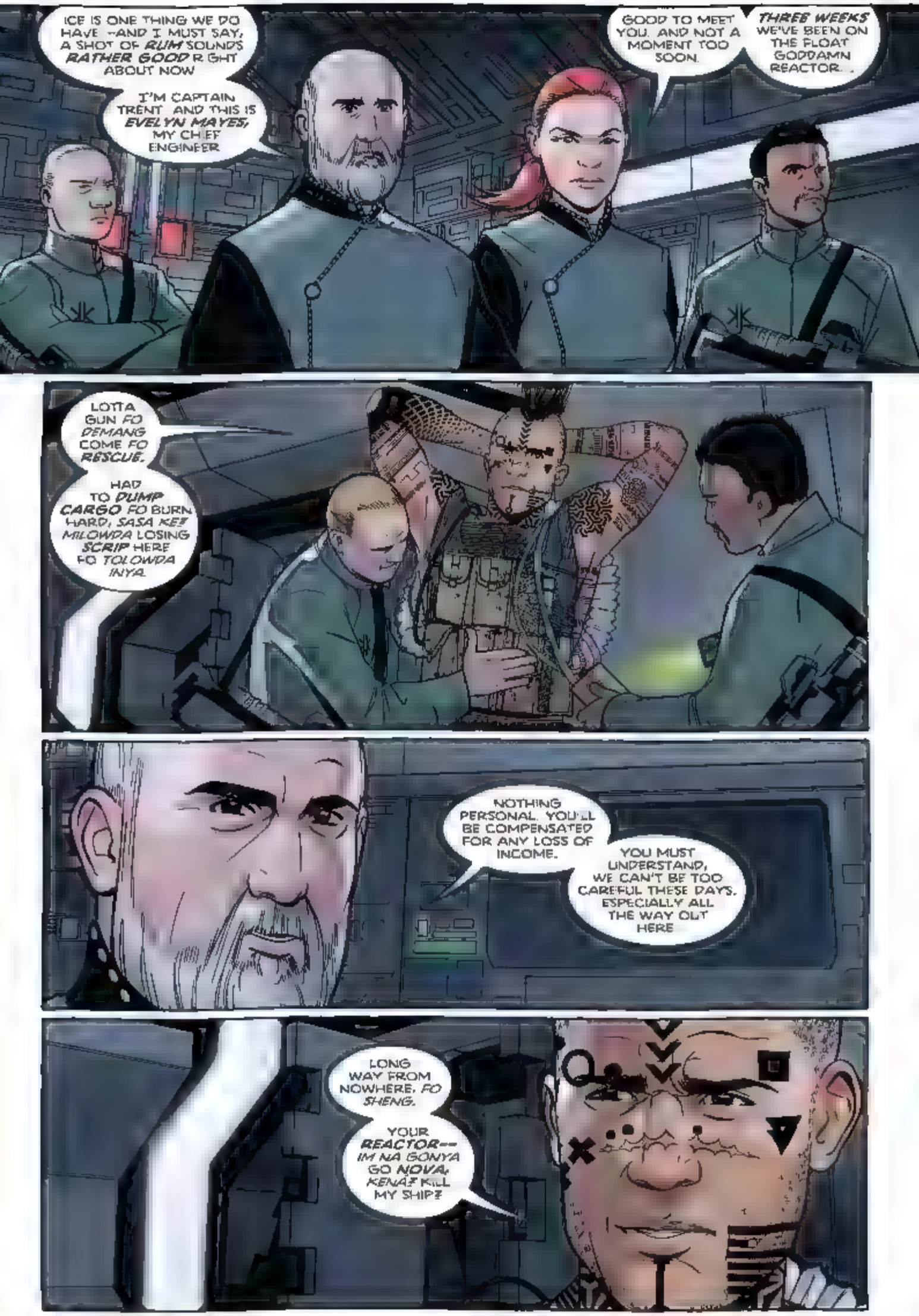
LET ME, BOSMANG.
ONE SIDE, KID
I BEEN KICKIN' IN DOORS A LOT LONGER THAN YOU, AND I AIN'T ABOUT TO QUIT NOW

CLEAR.
DATA CORE'S BEEN WIPED
PROFESSIONAL JOB
STILL, IT LOOKS LIKE THEY MIGHT'VE LEFT A LITTLE CHRISTMAS PRESENT
FOR NAOMI NAGATA

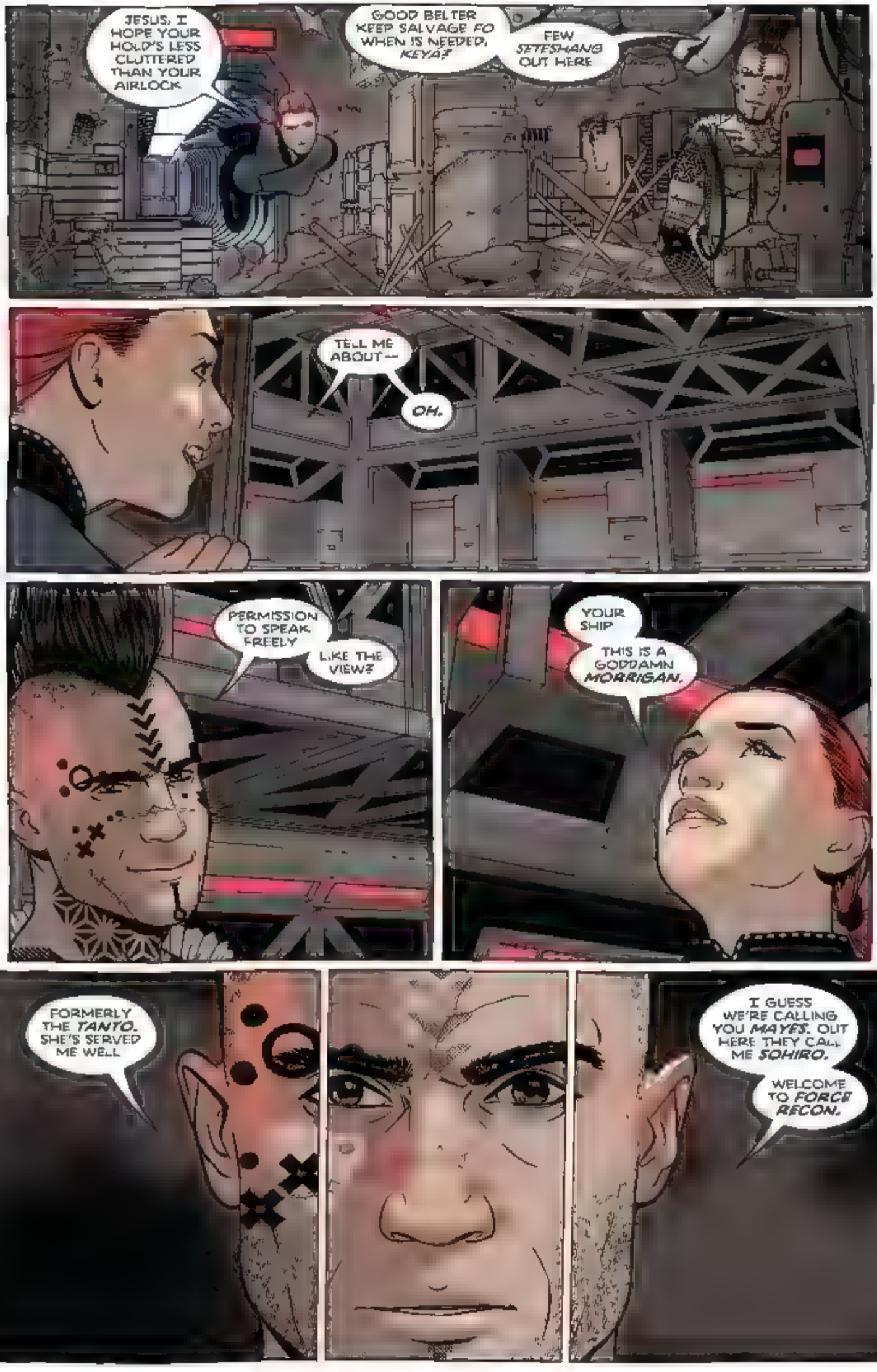


CHAPTER
TWO

ARIZONA BAY
ICE HAULER
ARIZONA BAY, DIS ROCKHOPPER CAMORRI GARRISTA ON FINAL APPROACH.
COPY THAT, GARRISTA. AND SINCERELY, THANK YOU. YOU'RE SAVING OUR ASS.
NOT A LOT OF PASSERS-BY OUT HERE, Y'KNOW?
IM TA NATING. ALL ONE BLOOD, KOPENG
STAND BY FO DOCK.
CAMORRI GARRISTA
BELTER PROSPECTOR
OYE! GOOD NEWS—MILOWDA TA BRING DA ROWM!
BAD NEWS—NAWIT DA ICE. BUT MI PENSA TO FOSHO FOSHO GOT PLENTY, KEYÁ?

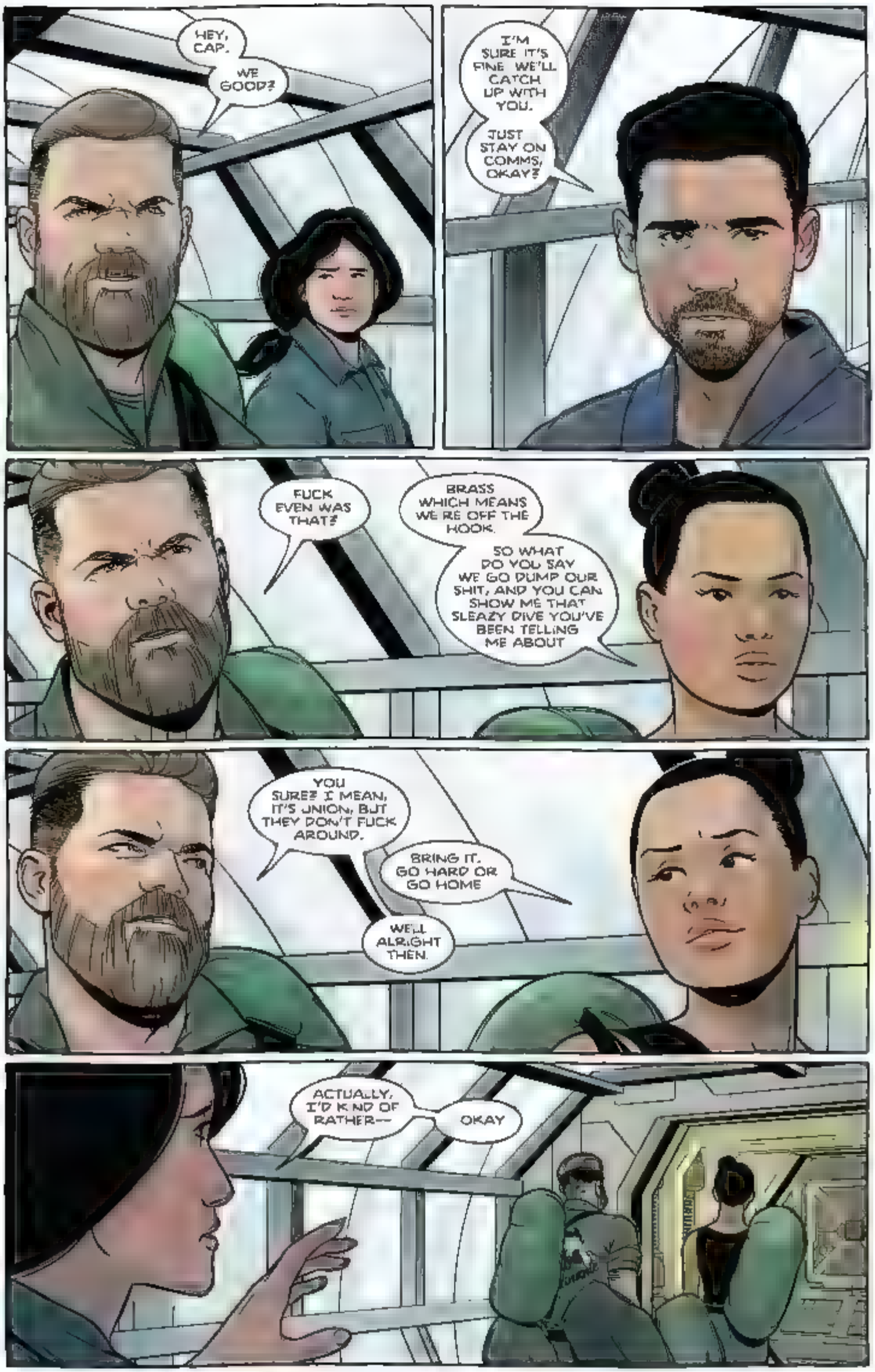

ICE IS ONE THING WE DO HAVE --AND I MUST SAY, A SHOT OF RUM SOUNDS RATHER GOOD RIGHT ABOUT NOW
I'M CAPTAIN TRENT AND THIS IS EVELYN MAYES, MY CHIEF ENGINEER
GOOD TO MEET YOU. AND NOT A MOMENT TOO SOON.
THREE WEEKS WE'VE BEEN ON THE FLOAT GODDAMN REACTOR. .
LOTTA GUN FO DEMANG COME FO RESCUE.
HAD TO DUMP CARGO FO BURN HARD, SASA KE? MILOWDA LOSING SCRIP HERE FO TOLOWDA INYA.
NOTHING PERSONAL. YOU'LL BE COMPENSATED FOR ANY LOSS OF INCOME.
YOU MUST UNDERSTAND, WE CAN'T BE TOO CAREFUL THESE DAYS. ESPECIALLY ALL THE WAY OUT HERE
LONG WAY FROM NOWHERE, FO SHENG.
YOUR REACTOR-- IM NA GONYA GO NOVA. KENA? KILL MY SHIP?

DUNNO WHAT TO TELL YOU, CONTAINMENT WENT SCREWY ON US.
EVERY TIME I FIRE UP THE REACTOR RESTART SEQUENCE, FEELS LIKE SHE'S ABOUT TO POP THE BOTTLE AND BLOW
SO HERE WE ARE, SCRAMMED AND STRANDED
SO WA PENGI KOYO. MILOWDA GONYA GET YOU FO SEFETIYE ON ARROKOTH.
HOW MANY FO RESCUE?
FIFTY-TWO SOULS. I FIGURE WE'LL RIG CRASH COUCHES IN YOUR HOLD, IF THAT'S OKAY?
LET'S GO TAKE A LOOK, SEE WHAT WE HAVE TO WORK WITH.
SOYÁ TO GÜTEGOW KEF
MAYES, TAKE SECURITY WITH YOU--
I'LL BE FINE, SKIPPER.
THESE FOLKS ARE HERE TO HELP US. REMEMBER?


JESUS, I HOPE YOUR HOLD'S LESS CLUTTERED THAN YOUR AIRLOCK
GOOD BELTER KEEP SALVAGE FO WHEN IS NEEDED, KEYA?
FEW SETESHANG OUT HERE
TELL ME ABOUT--
OH.
PERMISSION TO SPEAK FREELY
LIKE THE VIEW?
YOUR SHIP
THIS IS A GODDAMN MORRIGAN.
FORMERLY THE TANTO. SHE'S SERVED ME WELL
I GUESS WE'RE CALLING YOU MAYES. OUT HERE THEY CALL ME SOHIRO.
WELCOME TO FORCE RECON.

ADMIRAL SAJVETERRE SPOKE HIGHLY OF YOU. I CAN SEE WHY
OUTSTANDING WORK ON THE REACTOR.
THANK YOU, COMMANDER.
SPEC OPS HAD ME WORKING DEEP COVER AT THE BUSH NAVAL SHIPYARDS. I GOT TO KNOW THEIR SYSTEMS PRETTY WELL.
I WAS DUE TO EXTRACT TO THE *BARKEITH*, BUT...
WELL, THE WINDOW CLOSED ON ME LUCKY BREAK, TURNED OUT
THERE'S PLENTY OF US GOT LEFT BEHIND OUT IN THE COLD.
I INTEND TO RECTIFY THAT MISTAKE.
I'M ASSIGNING YOU A NEW MISSION, LIEUTENANT.
I'M GOING TO NEED YOUR SKILL SET, YOUR SHIP, AND ENCRYPTED COMMS
WITH *LACONIA*.

WE HAVE CONTROL, ROCINANTE
SECURE FOR DOCKING CLAMP CAPTURE
TELL YOU WHAT, FIRST THING I'M GONNA DO IS FIND SOME DECENT MARTIAN FOOD
THERE'S A PLACE ON LEVEL THREE THAT DOES THIS AMAZING RED KIBBLE
THEY EVEN GROW THEIR OWN PAPRIKA.
UH.
OR IF THAT'S NOT YOUR THING, THEY DO A MEAN KHLAV KALASH.
HOLDEN
NAGATA
YOU'RE WITH ME
HEY BULL WE WEREN'T EXPECTING A WELCOMING COMMITTEE
WHAT'S UP? EVERYTH NG OKAY ?
NOT HERE


HEY, CAP.
WE GOOD?
I'M SURE IT'S FINE WE'LL CATCH UP WITH YOU.
JUST STAY ON COMMS, OKAY?
FUCK EVEN WAS THAT?
BRASS WHICH MEANS WE'RE OFF THE HOOK.
SO WHAT DO YOU SAY WE GO DUMP OUR SHIT, AND YOU CAN SHOW ME THAT SLEAZY DIVE YOU'VE BEEN TELLING ME ABOUT
YOU SURE? I MEAN, IT'S UNION, BUT THEY DON'T FUCK AROUND.
BRING IT. GO HARD OR GO HOME
WELL ALRIGHT THEN.
ACTUALLY, I'D KIND OF RATHER—
OKAY

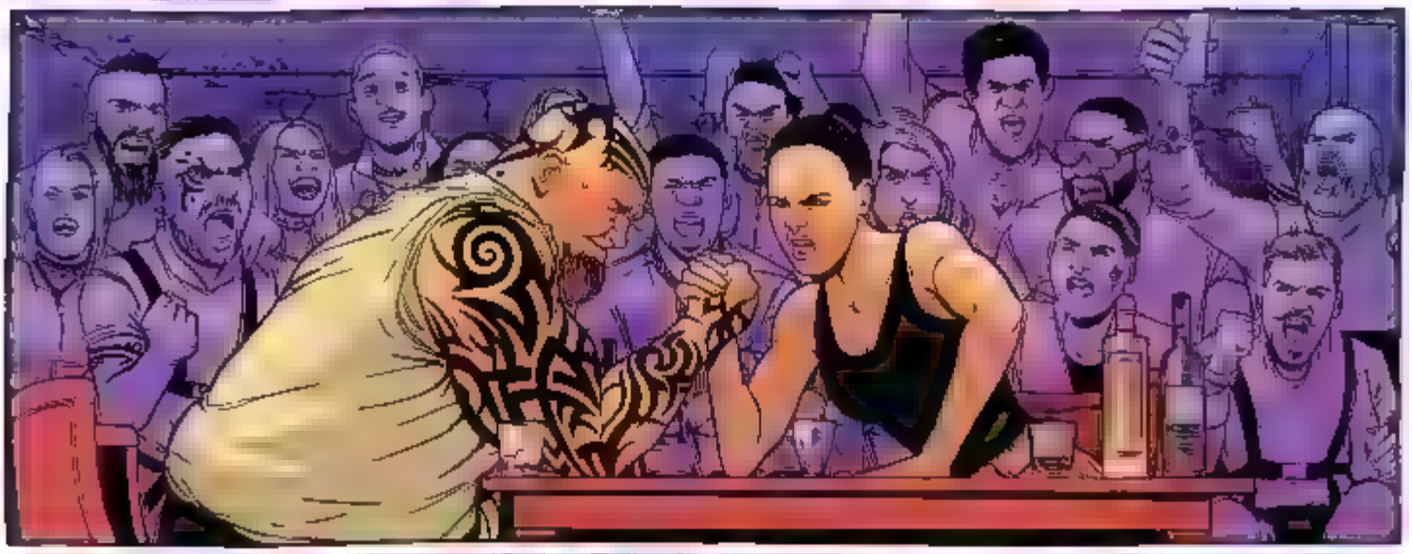
MADAM PRESIDENT
NO HARM, SESATA, BUT WE'RE JUST OFF THE BURN AND WE HAVEN'T EVEN SHOWERED YET
GO SECURE.
ROOM SECURED.
WHAT IS THIS?
HAVE WE DONE SOMETHING TO PISS YOU OFF, OR WHAT?
MAYBE THIS WILL REFRESH YOUR MEMORY.
TONIOMI NGATA
A TOOLBOX?
IT'S NOT MINE. I MEAN, I'VE SEEN A MILLION LIKE IT, BUT...
WHY'S IT GOT MY NAME ON IT?
OPEN IT

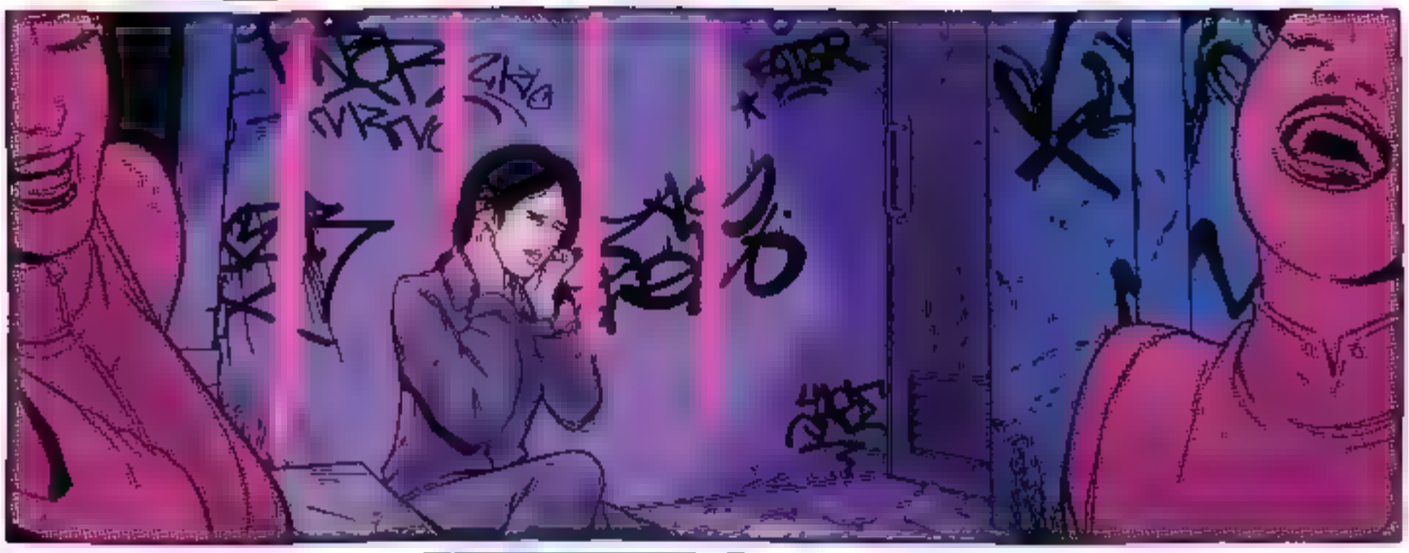
IT'S A *COMM BUFFER* MARTIAN DESIGN. THERE'S ONES JUST LIKE IT ON THE *ROCI.*
WHERE'S IT FROM...?
THE *PELLA.*
FLAGSHIP OF THE *FREE NAVY.*
COMMANDED BY THE WORST MASS-MURDERER IN HUMAN HISTORY *MARCO INAROS.*
WHO JUST HAPPENS TO BE YOUR *EX.*
THAT— THAT'S NOT *POSSIBLE.* I— WE—
THE *PELLA,* IT
WHAT THE *FUCK...?*

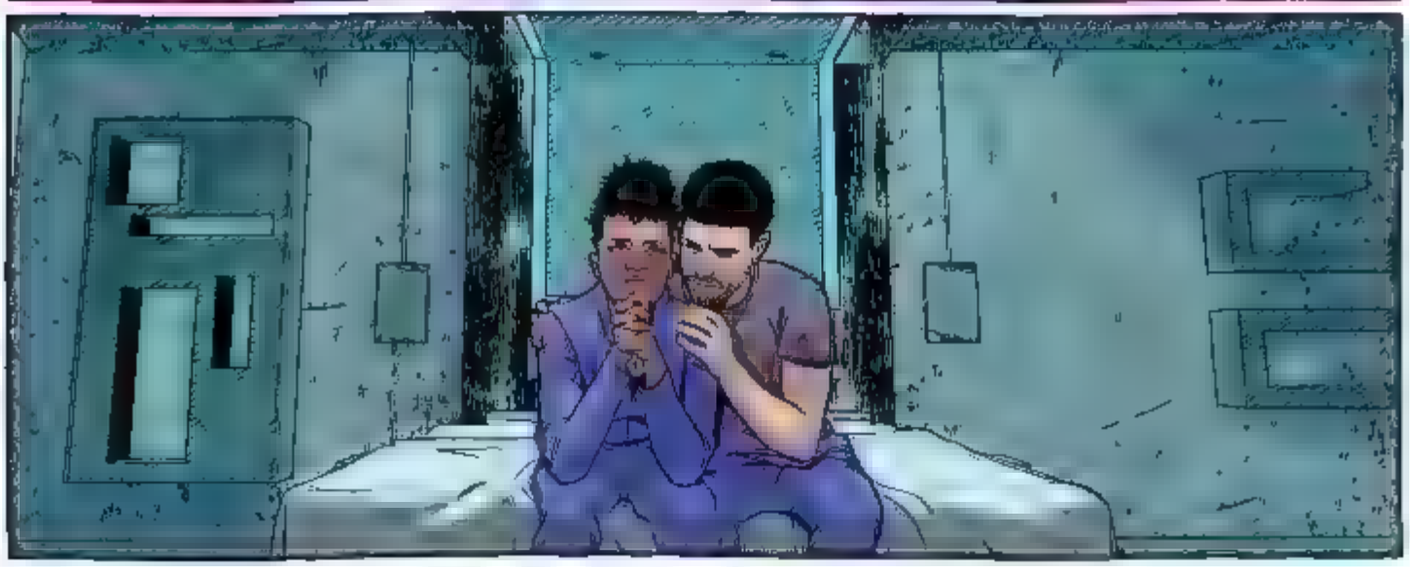
OKAY, JUST HOLD ON A SECOND HERE. WHAT EXACTLY ARE YOU IMPLYING?
THE PELLA IS GONE! WE SAW IT HAPPEN. IT WAS EATEN BY THE
WHATEVER THE HELL THOSE THINGS ARE ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE RINGS!
IT WAS FOUND IN AN ABANDONED SKIFF BULL THOUGHT IT WAS A BOMB.
IN A WAY HE WAS RIGHT.
ARE YOU TELLING ME
...SOMEONE MADE IT OFF THAT SHIP?
THAT, OR IT'S A BUNCH OF BULLSHIT— AND SOMEONE'S HOPIN' WE SWALLOW IT WHOLE
HERE. HAVE A TASTE.

MARCO INAROS, IN REGARD TO YOUR REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL ARMAMENTS— YOUR REQUEST IS DENIED.
ANY FURTHER COMMUNICATIONS WILL BE REFUSED, AND ANY SHIPS ATTEMPTING TO ENTER OUR SPACE WILL BE DESTROYED
YOU WERE A USEFUL DISTRACTION, BUT I HAVE GODS TO KILL.
THE RING TO LACONIA IS NOW CLOSED. YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN.
OYEDENG, BELTALOWDA.
DUARTE HELPED INAROS KILL MILLIONS OF INNOCENT PEOPLE.
. AS A DISTRACTION?

THERE IS MORE. A *LOT* MORE.
TIGHTBEAM COMMS BETWEEN DUARTE AND INAROS. ENCRYPTION PROTOCOLS. IFF CODES. HULL PROFILES. DRIVE SIGNATURES.
TOOK US A WHILE TO CRACK THE ENCRYPTION.
'COURSE, IF IT'S A FAKE-OUT, THEY WOULDN'T WANNA MAKE IT LOOK TOO EASY, RIGHT?
NEAR AS WE CAN FIGURE, THE BUFFER WAS A *BACKUP*...
MEANING SOMEONE COULD'VE SMUGGLED IT OFF THE *PELLA* WITHOUT TRIPPIN' ANY WIRES—*BEFORE* IT WENT DUTCHMAN.
NAOMI IF THERE'S SOMETHING YOU WANT TO TELL ME?
NOW IS THE TIME



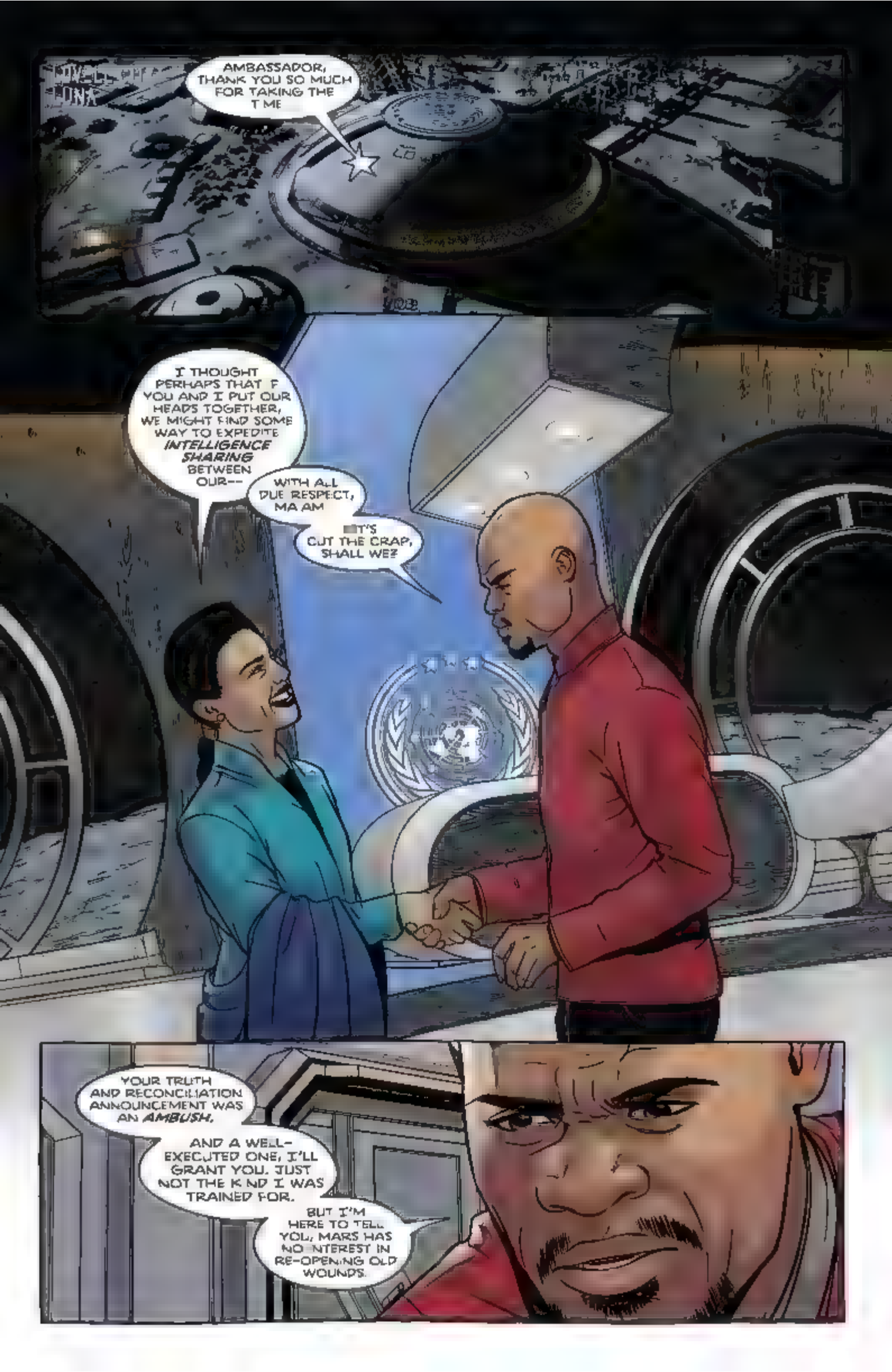




YOU ASK ME, THE WHOLE THING STINKS.
COULD BE THE SKIFF WAS A DEAD DROP OR FOR ALL WE KNOW, IT'S BAIT.
EITHER WAY, IT'S GOT NAGATA'S NAME ALL OVER IT LITERALLY
STILL YOU DON'T TRUST HER.
SHE'S BEEN THROUGH SOME SHIT, I GET IT. BUT YOU KNOW WHO SHE USED TO RUN WITH.
SO DID I
I DUNNO..
FRED JOHNSON GOT INTO SOMETHING WITH HER, BACK IN THE DAY. NEVER WOULD TELL ME WHAT IT WAS.
STILL CHAPS MY ASS, FRED KEEPIN' ME OUT LIKE THAT.
AN' LOOK HOW THAT TURNED OUT FOR HIM

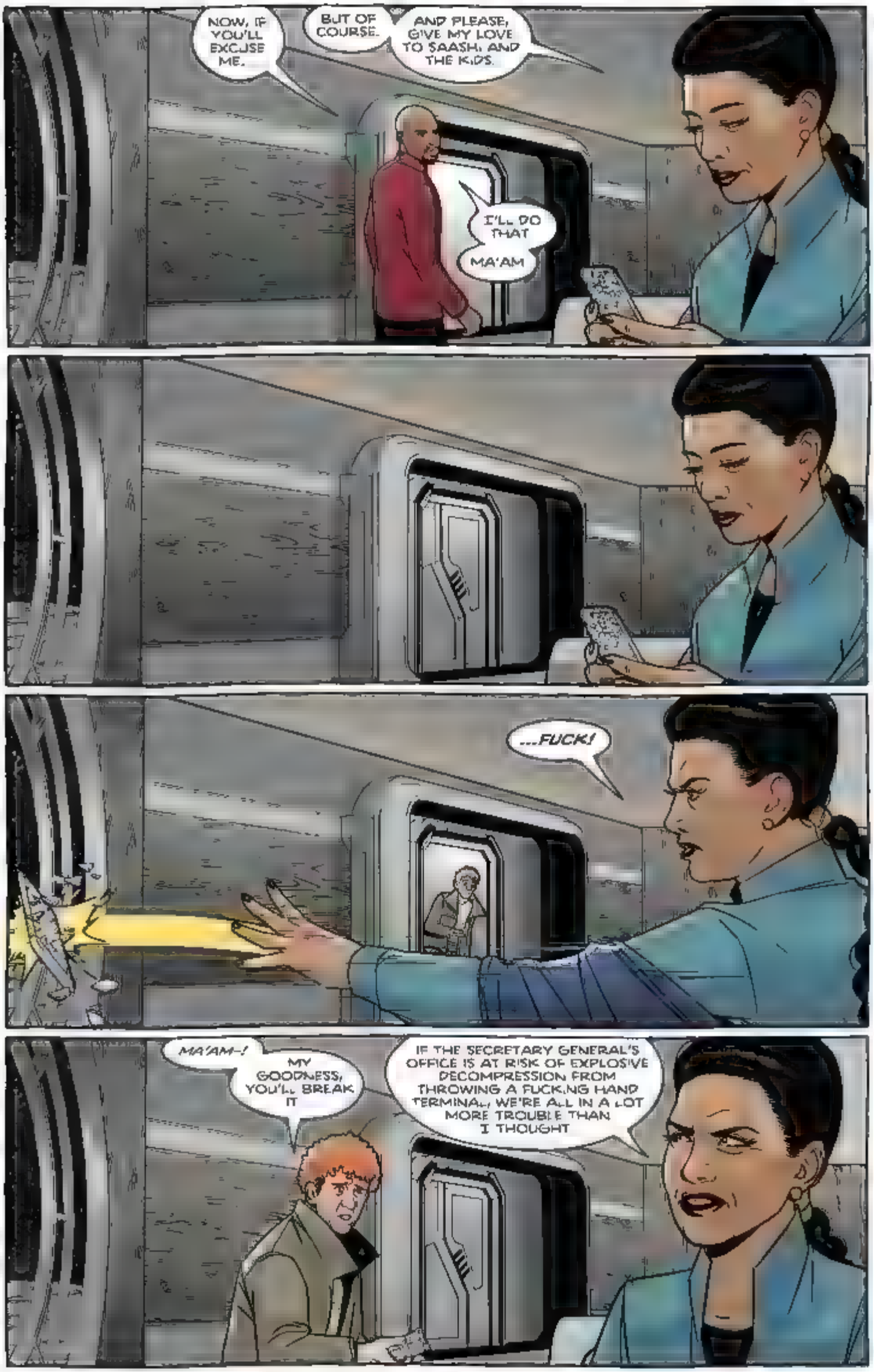
HE TOLD ME
BACK ON TYCHO, FRED ASKED ME TO PUT FEELERS OUT DISCREET
CERES. PALLAS. OLD-SCHOOL OPA.
HE WAS LOOKING FOR SOMEONE...
FLIP NAROS
NAOMI'S SON.
JESUS CHRIST...
MAYBE THE *PELLA* COMMS ARE DISINFORMATION OR MAYBE THEY'RE EXACTLY WHAT THEY APPEAR TO BE
HOW DO WE FIND OUT FOR SURE?
I GUESS WE COULD ASK ***MARS*** REAL NICE. BUT THEY'D PROBABLY RESPOND WITH A DENIABLE STRIKE TEAM

PERHAPS THERE IS ANOTHER WAY.
SOMETHING ELSE I LEARNED FROM FRED. THROW THE *OLD WOMAN* A BONE, SOMETIMES SHE THROWS SOMETHING BACK.
LIKE MAYBE SOME DESTROYERS, HELP WITH OUR PIRATE PROBLEM
AVASARALA? YOU SHITTIN' ME?
WHAT DO WE HAVE TO LOSE?
MEANWHILE, I'M SENDING THE HULL PROFILES AND DRIVE SIGNATURES TO OUR PIRATE HUNTERS.
WHO KNOWS, MAYBE WE GET LUCKY
GOTTA SAY, BOSS, THIS WHOLE OPTIMISM THING YOU'RE TRYIN' ON?
IT AIN'T YOU.

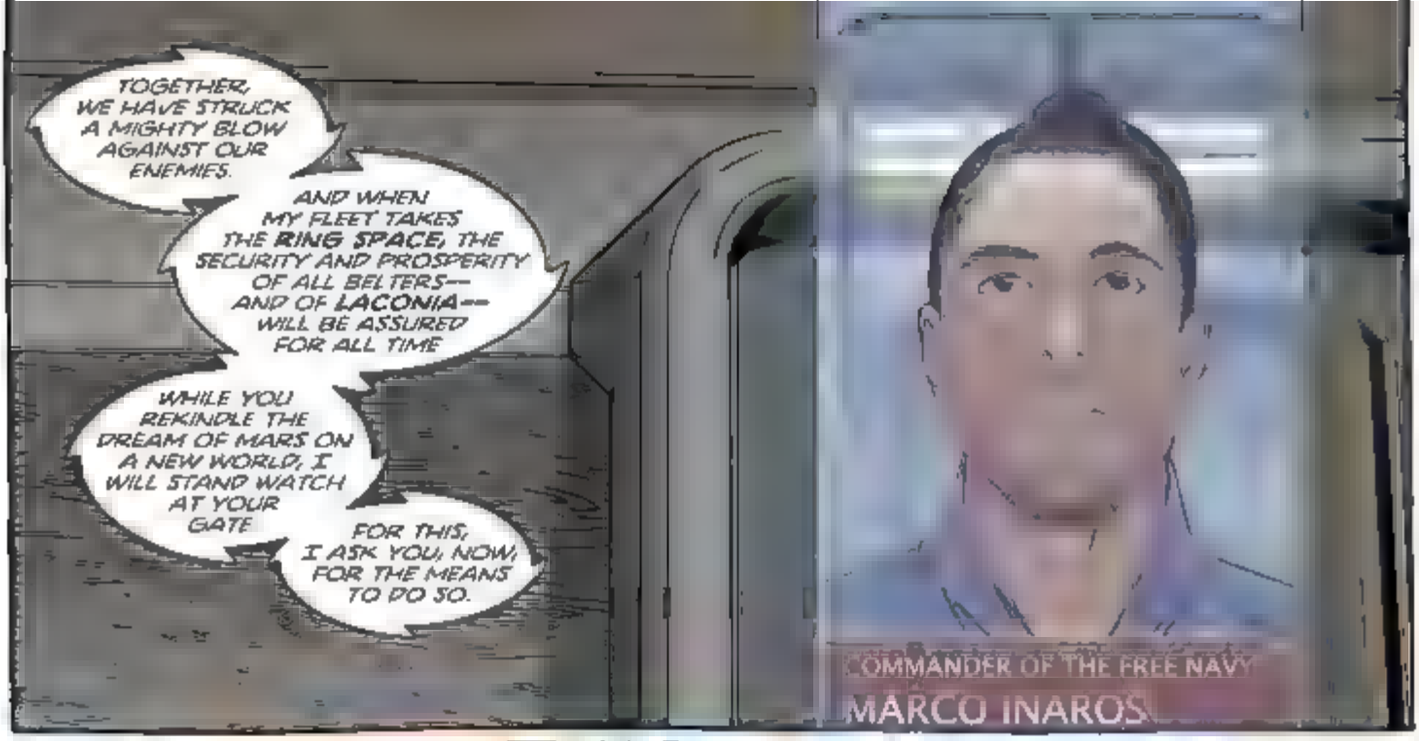

AMBASSADOR, THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR TAKING THE T ME
I THOUGHT PERHAPS THAT F YOU AND I PUT OUR HEADS TOGETHER, WE MIGHT FIND SOME WAY TO EXPEDITE *INTELLIGENCE SHARING* BETWEEN OUR--
WITH ALL DUE RESPECT, MA AM
[redacted]T'S CUT THE CRAP, SHALL WE?
YOUR TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION ANNOUNCEMENT WAS AN *AMBUSH.*
AND A WELL-EXECUTED ONE, I'LL GRANT YOU. JUST NOT THE K ND I WAS TRAINED FOR.
BUT I'M HERE TO TELL YOU, MARS HAS NO NTEREST IN RE-OPEN NG OLD WOUNDS.

AND YET, THEY SAY *SUNLIGHT* IS THE BEST DISINFECTANT
SURELY THAT WOULD BE BETTER THAN LETTING THOSE OLD WOUNDS *FESTER* BENEATH A DOME
OR, GOD FORBID, AT THE HELM OF A BATTLESHIP
DUARTE AND HIS DEFECTORS ARE A *MARS* PROBLEM.
I'LL SAY THEY *DECAPITATED* YOUR CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT
OR ARE WE STILL PRETENDING *BELTERS* WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR BOMBING THE MARTIAN PARLIAMENT?
NICE TRY, MA AM
BUT I'M AFRAID I'M NOT AT LIBERTY TO DISCUSS ANY INTERNAL INVESTIGATIONS WHICH MAY OR MAY NOT BE UNDERWAY
AS YOU WELL KNOW

I MEANT WHAT I SAID BACK ON EARTH, YOU KNOW. WE'RE NOT ENEMIES.
MARS NEEDS FOOD. EARTH NEEDS YOUR TERRAFORMING EXPERTISE.
LET US HELP EACH OTHER.
YOU GOT YOUR HANDSHAKE FOR THE CAMERAS, MA'AM. THE COMMISSION IS A PUBLIC RELATIONS EXERCISE, NOTHING MORE
AND THIS MORNING I RECEIVED A COMMUNIQUÉ FROM THE PRIME MINISTER...
UNITED NATION
THOUGH MARS REMAINS A *NOMINAL* MEMBER OF THE TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION...
... WE WILL *NOT* BE SHARING *ANY* CLASSIFIED MATERIAL RELATING TO MARTIAN PLANETARY SECURITY
IN OTHER WORDS
GO FUCK YOURSELF.
AS I SAID, MA'AM, I WAS TRAINED AS A SOLDIER, NOT A DIPLOMAT.
BUT I'D SAY YOU HAVE THE CORRECT FORM OF WORDS.


NOW, IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME.
BUT OF COURSE.
AND PLEASE, GIVE MY LOVE TO SAASHI AND THE KIDS.
I'LL DO THAT MA'AM
...FUCK!
MA'AM-!
MY GOODNESS, YOU'LL BREAK IT
IF THE SECRETARY GENERAL'S OFFICE IS AT RISK OF EXPLOSIVE DECOMPRESSION FROM THROWING A FUCKING HAND TERMINAL, WE'RE ALL IN A LOT MORE TROUBLE THAN I THOUGHT

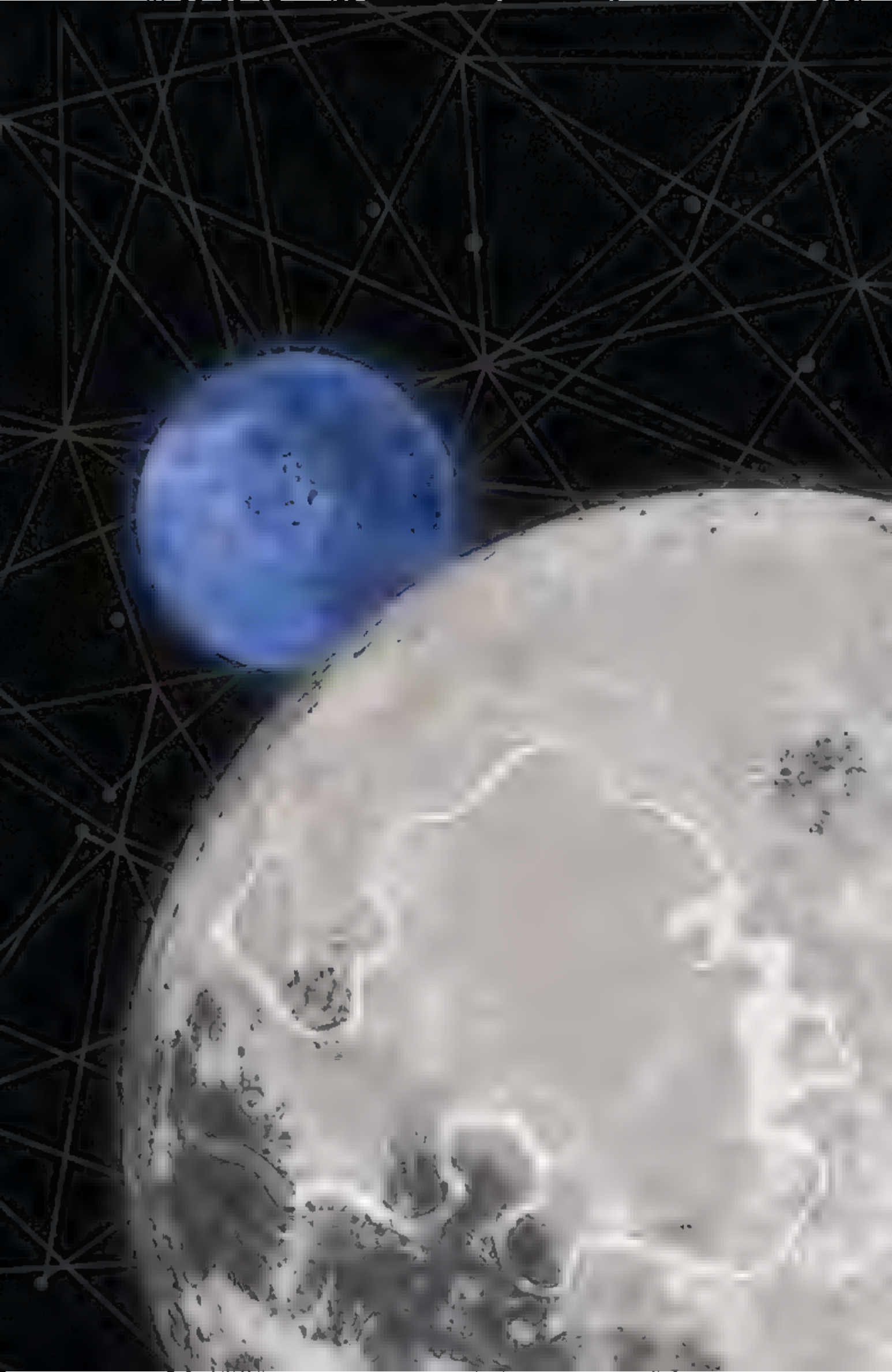
NO, I MEAN—
OKAY, THE SCREEN'S CRACKED, BUT IT STILL WORKS
HERE THERE'S A COMM FOR YOU. PRESIDENT OF THE TRANSPORT UNION.
GOD WHAT DOES SHE WANT NOW?
I—I DON'T KNOW, MA'AM. I'M NOT CLEARED FOR TS/SCI—
GIVE IT TO ME
SHOULD I LEAVE, OR—?
MY GOD.
HIGH CONSUL DUARTE.
YOU HAVE KEPT YOUR WORD, AND I HAVE KEPT MINE.


TOGETHER, WE HAVE STRUCK A MIGHTY BLOW AGAINST OUR ENEMIES.
AND WHEN MY FLEET TAKES THE RING SPACE, THE SECURITY AND PROSPERITY OF ALL BELTERS— AND OF LACONIA— WILL BE ASSURED FOR ALL TIME
WHILE YOU REKINDLE THE DREAM OF MARS ON A NEW WORLD, I WILL STAND WATCH AT YOUR GATE
FOR THIS, I ASK YOU, NOW, FOR THE MEANS TO DO SO.
COMMANDER OF THE FREE NAVY
MARCO INAROS

THE FIGHT IS NOT THERE, BUT HERE.
WITH DONNAGER-CLASS BATTLESHIPS, AND WITH LACONIAN RAILGUNS MOUNTED TO THE RING ITSELF, I COULD PREVENT OUR ENEMIES FROM EVEN DARING TO APPROACH.

.. AND WITH YOUR SCATTERED DRAGON TEETH, SOW DISCORD AMONG THEIR RANKS.
GET ME THE DIRECTOR OF INTELLIGENCE.
NOW!

MARS DOESN'T WANT TO RE-OPEN OLD WOUNDS ?
DRUMMER JUST SENT US THEIR BLOODY BANDAGES.

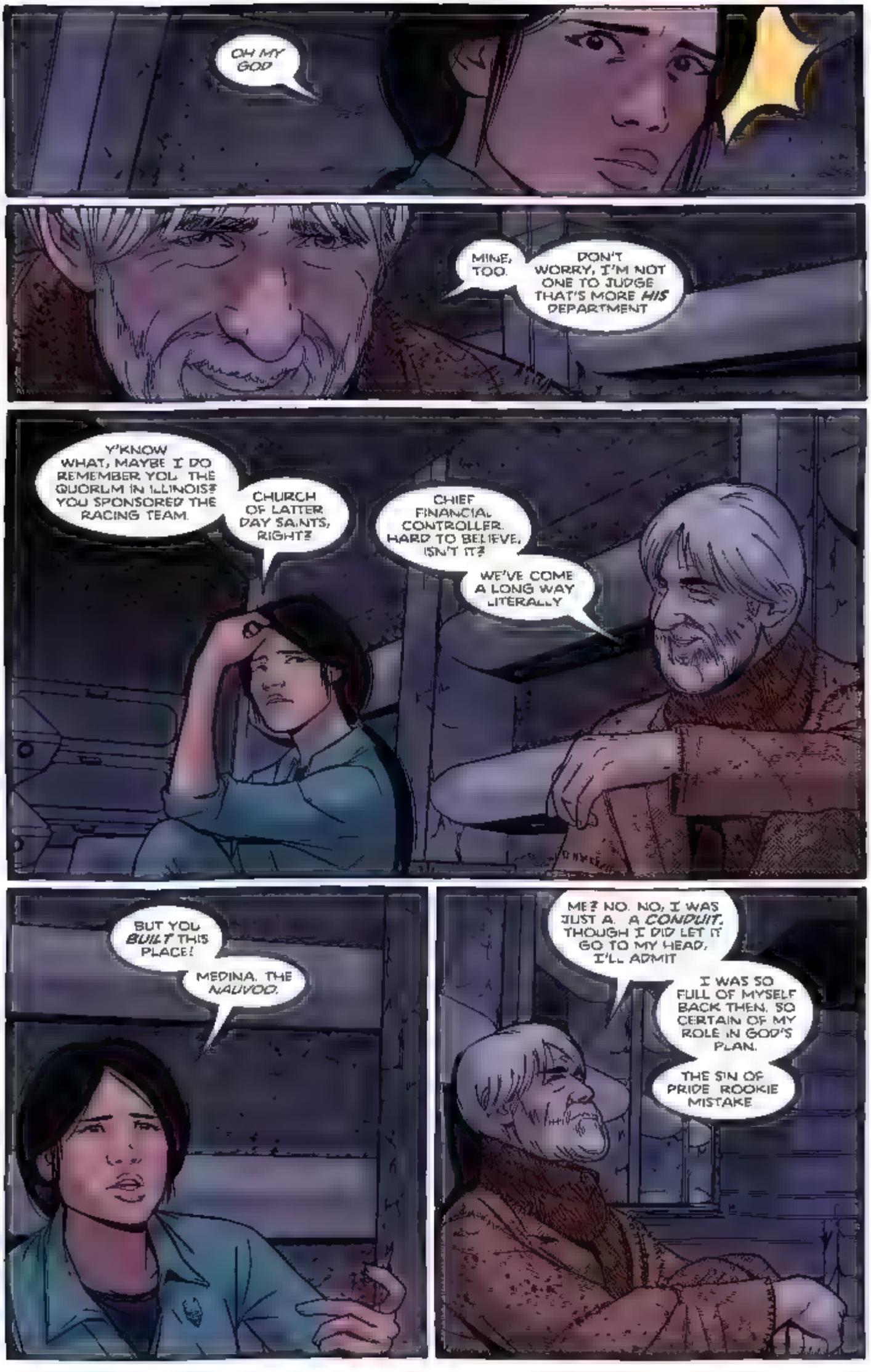


CHAPTER
THREE

YOU DON'T BELONG HERE
NEITHER DO *YOU*, JULIE!
WHAT ARE YOU EVEN *DOING* OUT HERE? BUYING *DRUGS?*
RIGHT, BECAUSE ANYONE WITH LESS MONEY THAN US *MUST* BE A DRUG DEALER.
JESUS.
DAD WANTS ME TO BRING YOU HOME
DAD WANTS A LOT OF THINGS. HE SEES SOMETHING, HE WANTS IT
AND WHEN HE CAN'T HAVE IT, IT MAKES HIM CRAZY.
HE'S NEVER GONNA CHANGE, CLARISSA.
ARE YOU?

JULIE... FOR ONCE, CAN WE JUST NOT?
SURE GO BACK TO YOUR PARTY
I'M DONE. I'M OUT
WHAT DOES THAT EVEN MEAN? OUT WHERE?
LUNA. FOR STARTERS
THAT'S ABSURD! WHEN ARE YOU COMING BACK?
JULIE...?
WHEN ARE YOU COMING BACK...?
YOU SHOULD GET OUT TOO, CLARISSA

"WHILE YOU STILL HAVE WHAT'S LEFT OF YOUR SOUL."
MEDINA STATION. IN THE RING SPACE
ONE TOO MANY?
ENDOCRINE THING.
IMPLANTS
IT'LL PASS. I JUST NEED A MOMENT
YOU'RE SHAKING HERE, COME AND SIT YOURSELF DOWN.
I'M AFRAID IT'S NOT EXACTLY WINNIPESAUKEE
WHAT?
HOW DO YOU KNOW ABOUT?
IT'S OKAY, I WOULDN'T EXPECT YOU TO RECOGNIZE ME NOT THESE DAYS.


OH MY GOD
MINE, TOO.
DON'T WORRY, I'M NOT ONE TO JUDGE THAT'S MORE *HIS* DEPARTMENT
Y'KNOW WHAT, MAYBE I DO REMEMBER YOU. THE QUORUM IN ILLINOIS? YOU SPONSORED THE RACING TEAM.
CHURCH OF LATTER DAY SAINTS, RIGHT?
CHIEF FINANCIAL CONTROLLER. HARD TO BELIEVE, ISN'T IT?
WE'VE COME A LONG WAY LITERALLY
BUT YOU *BUILT* THIS PLACE!
MEDINA. THE *NAUVOO.*
ME? NO. NO, I WAS JUST A. A *CONDUIT.* THOUGH I DID LET IT GO TO MY HEAD, I'LL ADMIT
I WAS SO FULL OF MYSELF BACK THEN. SO CERTAIN OF MY ROLE IN GOD'S PLAN.
THE SIN OF PRIDE. ROOKIE MISTAKE.

WE PUT *EVERYTHING* INTO THE *NAUVOO*. ALL OUR FAITH. HOPE
MONEY.
EVERYTHING.
GOD HAD OTHER PLANS, OF COURSE
HOW CAN YOU STILL HAVE *FAITH*, AFTER A THING LIKE THAT?
AFTER SEEING IT WAS ALL FOR NOTHING?
FORGIVE ME, YOU MISUNDERSTAND. YOU AND I, WE'RE INSIDE A *MIRACLE* RIGHT NOW. *LITERALLY* A MIRACLE
GOD TOOK THE *NAUVOO*, AND HE GAVE US THE *RINGS*.
WE'D HOPED TO TAKE HIS GOSPEL TO ANOTHER STAR. NOW WE TAKE IT TO A *THOUSAND* STARS.
SO THE LESSON IS... WHAT? THINK BIGGER?
ONLY THAT WE CAN NEVER TRULY KNOW WHAT THE FUTURE MAY HOLD, AND THAT'S OKAY
IF YOU SIMPLY REMAIN OPEN TO IT... OPEN TO *CHANGE*...
YOU WILL BE *BLESSED*.

MADAM SECRETARY-GENERAL, I'M AFRAID THIS IS *MOST* IRREGULAR!
WE HAVE *PROCEDURES*—!
IF NECESSARY, I CAN HAVE INMATE 12-03-7154 TRANSFERRED TO AN INTERROGATION SUITE—
NO.
IN—IN THAT CASE, I MUST INSIST THAT YOU RELINQUISH ANY METALLIC OR FRANGIBLE OBJECTS YOU MAY HAVE ON YOUR PERSON.
THAT WOULD INCLUDE JEWELRY, HAND TERMINAL, ANYTHING THAT COULD BE USED AS A WEAPON—
STOP TALKING.
YOU. OPEN THE FUCKING DOOR
MA'AM, WITH RESPECT, I'D RECOMMEND YOU RETAIN YOUR ARMED ESCORT AT THE VERY LEAST
WAIT OUT HERE
IF ANYONE FOLLOWS ME INTO THIS CELL WITHOUT MY EXPRESS INVITATION, I'LL CONSIDER IT *TREASON* AND WORRY ABOUT THE PAPERWORK LATER.

HELLO, SADAVIR. I'M GLAD TO SEE YOU'RE LOOKING WELL.
FORGIVE ME. I SHOULD HAVE COME YEARS AGO...
SADAVIR ERRINWRIGHT
INMATE 12-03-7154
BUT EARTH MUST COME FIRST
IT'S TRUE, THERE MAY HAVE BEEN ONE OR TWO MORE PRESSING MATTERS.
ARE YOU ALRIGHT?
THAT—
I'M SORRY THAT'S . THE FIRST PHYSICAL CONTACT I'VE HAD WITH ANOTHER HUMAN BEING .N...FIVE YEARS

MAY I SIT?
WOULD IT MAKE A DIFFERENCE IF I SAID NO?
OF COURSE
MY JOINTS AREN'T WHAT THEY WERE, I'LL ADMIT BUT THAT IS ONE OF THE FEW THINGS I APPRECIATE ABOUT LUNAR GRAVITY
I MUST LOOK PATHETIC TO YOU.
IS THAT WHY YOU'RE HERE? TO ADM RE YOUR, .TROPHY? ANOTHER HEAD ON THE WALL?
WE'VE BOTH DONE TERRIBLE THINGS, SADAV R.
DIFFERENT OUTCOMES. FAIR TO SAY
SOMET,MES THAT'S HOW THE GAME PLAYS OUT IT COULD EASILY HAVE PLAYED OUT THE OTHER WAY
YOU THINK THAT'S WHAT I WANTED? TO SIT IN THE BIG CHAIR?
NO. I THINK YOU DID WHAT YOU BELIEVED WAS NECESSARY TO KEEP EARTH SAFE AND I THINK YOU WOULD AGAIN.
I HOPE SO, ANYWAY IT'S WHY I'M HERE.

JULES-PIERRE MAO WAS PLAYING EARTH AND MARS AGAINST EACH OTHER..
UNTIL YOU ASSASSINATED THE MARTIAN DEFENSE MINISTER, AND SEIZED CONTROL OF PROJECT CALIBAN.
THIS IS OLD NEWS—
OLD NEWS, PERHAPS. BUT NOT THE WHOLE STORY
OUR INTELLIGENCE PEOPLE SUSPECT YOU HAVEN'T BEEN ENTIRELY FORTHCOMING ABOUT WHAT OTHER MARTIAN SECRETS YOU MAY HAVE ACQUIRED FROM JULES-PIERRE MAO.
LOOK AROUND YOU, CHRISTEN. THIS IS MY WORLD NOW
I'M GOING TO SPEND THE REST OF MY LIFE IN THIS CELL. NOTHING'S GOING TO CHANGE THAT.
WHAT GOOD IS THERE IN DIGGING UP THE PAST?
THAT DEPENDS.
IF OUR PEOPLE DECIDE YOU'RE OF NO FURTHER INTELLIGENCE VALUE, THEY MIGHT FINALLY RUN OUT OF REASONS NOT TO APPROVE YOUR DEPORTATION TO MARS.

THAT'S A DEATH SENTENCE YOU KNOW THAT
MARS WOULD KILL ME TO COVER UP WHAT I KNOW!
PRECISELY
HEH. .
I'D HEARD YOU'D GONE SOFT MORE FOOL ME FOR BELIEVING IT
FINE SO YOU'VE SHOWN ME THE STICK. WHAT'S THE CARROT?
SHOW HIM IN.
JEFFERSON. ?

HEY, DAD
I'VE MADE ARRANGEMENTS FOR MONTHLY VISITS.
IN EXCHANGE, YOU'RE GOING TO TELL ME *EVERYTHING* MAO REVEALED TO YOU ABOUT MARTIAN *BLACK BUDGET* PROJECTS AND COVERT OPERATIONS.
STARTING WITH THE *DRAGON TEETH*.

OKAY PDC'S ARE TOPPED UP TORPEDOES ARE ON THE WAY WE'VE GOT FILTERS, JUICE, FUEL PELLETS
WHAT ELSE DO WE NEED?
COFFEE
PRAX PACKS FOR THE FOOD RECYCLERS
AND COFFEE
HANG ON A SEC, THEY'VE MESSED UP THE TORPEDO CONSIGNMENT
HALF ARE SUPPOSED TO BE NUKES, BUT THESE ARE ALL PLASMA WARHEADS.
I'M PRETTY SURE I PAID FOR NUKES
IT'S THE SORT OF THING I GENERALLY TRY NOT TO BE SLOPPY ABOUT

FUCKING BULL. HE'S DOWNGRADED OUR ORDINANCE LICENSE--AND YOU JUST KNOW IT'S BECAUSE OF ME.
PASHANGWALA--!
EASY I'LL GO TALK TO HIM.
BULL TALKS MARINE
GIMME THE WORD, I'LL STRAIGHTEN HIM OUT
GREAT, THANKS BOBBIE
THOUGH I'D APPRECIATE IT IF YOU COULD TRY AND KEEP THE BODYCOUNT TO A MINIMUM?
NO PROMISES, CAP
I'M ALL DONE WITH THE THING. WANT ME TO STOW THE FUEL PELLETS?
ACTUALLY, AMOS, COULD YOU GO AND CHECK THEY'VE FINISHED TOPPING UP THE WATER TANKS?
THE GUY'S BEEN DOWN THERE A WHILE, AND I'M NOT SURE HE KNOWS WHAT HE'S DOING.
ON IT, BOSS.

SO ONE TIME, I FOUND THIS GUY ROOTIN' AROUND DOWN HERE WITH SHIT HE SHOULDN'T BE ROOTIN' AROUND WITH.
I PUT HIM OUT THE AIRLOCK.
DON'T GET ME WRONG, HE HAD A VAC SUIT ON AND EVERYTHING.
BUT MY POINT IS, THE SUIT IS OPTIONAL.

NO HARM, BOSMANG. MI WANYA BE SURE DA OWKWA PURE AN' CLEAN, KEYA? NA FELOTA CLOG UP YOUR THRUSTER FEED.
'CEPT THAT'S A NAV PANEL.
FOSHO? MI NA SASA THESE DUSTER SHIPS...
WARNING
THAT'S FUNNY
'CAUSE IT LOOKS TO ME LIKE YOU SASA PRETTY GOOD.
AAGH--!
NNNGH--!
ROCINANTE

RRAAAAGH--!
GAHH--!

UHHF--!
HLGKK--
AAAAGH--!

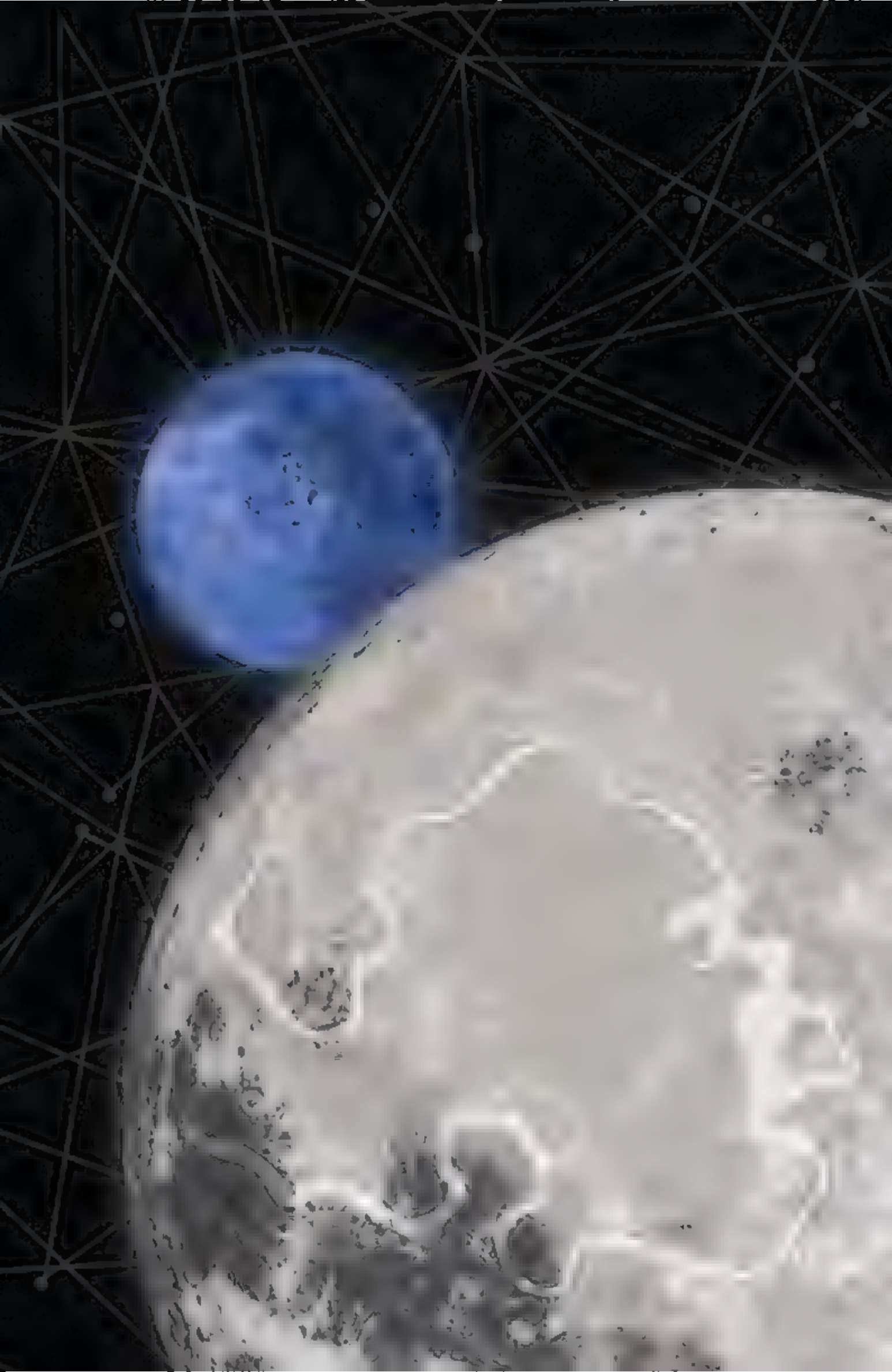
HLLLGKK--
AMOS!
AMOS!
AMOS--!
WARNING
NOT A MONSTER

CEREBRAL HYPOXIA. MODERATE APOPTOSIS ACROSS THE PRE-FRONTAL CORTEX..
90
93
NEURAL ACTIVITY IS LOW BUT IT'S THERE
IN OTHER WORDS, HE'LL LIVE BUT HE MAY NOT BE HIMSELF
HE NEEDS TO TALK
HE NEEDS TO HEAL. GIVE THE MEDS TIME TO DO THEIR WORK.
NAME'S LEV MOLINA BEEN ON THE DOCK CREW FOR THREE YEARS NOW CLEAN SHEET MAYBE TOO CLEAN.
I GOT MY PEOPLE STRIPPIN' H M DOWN TO THE WIRING COMMS, CONTACTS, CAMERAS, THE WORKS.
SO FAR, NADA.

I BEEN IN ENOUGH ROCK-HOPPER BAR FIGHTS TO KNOW, THIS GUY AIN'T THAT
HE KNEW WHAT HE WAS DOIN'. REAL BOBBIE -TYPE SHIT
YOU'RE SAYING HE'S EX-MILITARY?
NOPE. JUST THAT'S HOW HE FIGHTS.
WHOEVER HE IS, HE WAS ACCESSING THE ROC'S NAVIGATION SYSTEM. RIGHT WHERE IT HOOKS INTO THE COMM ARRAY
[redacted] TELL ME HE DIDN'T INJECT CODE INTO OUR SYSTEM.
WORSE. IT WAS ALREADY THERE
...WHAT?

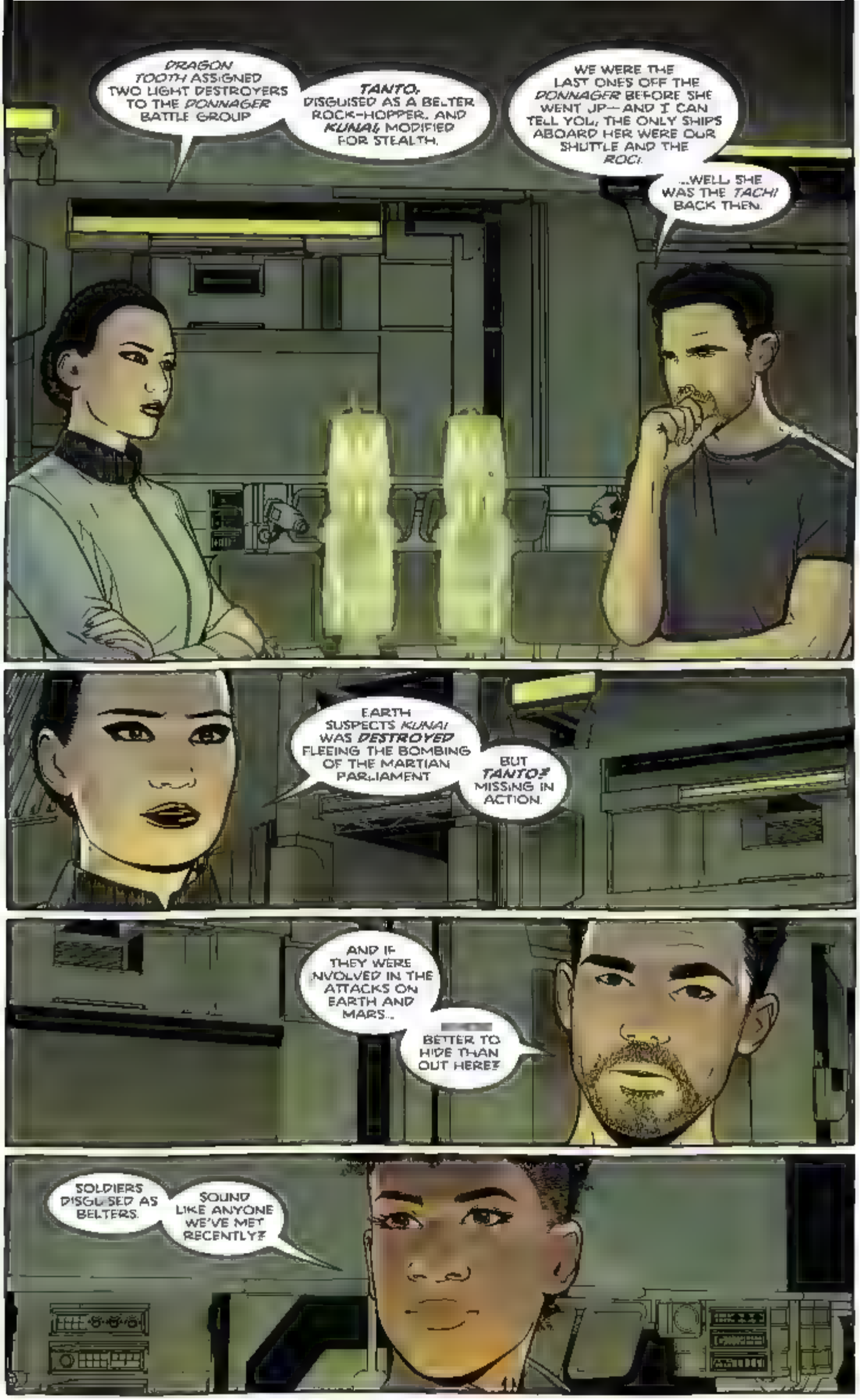
THE ROCI CHECKS FOR GAMARRA CODE AUTOMATICALLY NOW
ANYTHING RELATED TO VITAL SYSTEMS--REACTOR, LIFE SUPPORT, WHATEVER--IT'LL PING A RED FLAG IF ANYONE MESSES WITH IT
BUT THIS WAS A LOW-LEVEL SUBSYSTEM. POSITIONAL DATA.
POSITIONAL--?
SON OF A BITCH
SOHIRO.
THAT'S WHY THESE PIRATES HAVE ALWAYS BEEN THREE STEPS AHEAD OF US, EVEN WHEN WE'RE RUNNING DARK.
SOHIRO KNEW EXACTLY WHERE WE WERE GOING TO BE--AND WHEN.
AND FOR ALL WE KNOW, THAT'S TRUE OF EVERY OTHER PIRATE-HUNTER OUT HERE. THEY ALL RESUPPLY AT MEDINA.
WE HAVE TO WARN THEM--
WAIT IF THE ROCI WAS TRANSMITTING, SHOULDN'T WE HAVE NOTICED?
THAT'S THE BEAUTY OF IT
THE HACK BUNDLES A DATA PACKAGE, THEN WAITS 'TIL IT CAN HIDE IT IN ONE OF OUR OWN TIGHTBEAMS TO MEDINA.

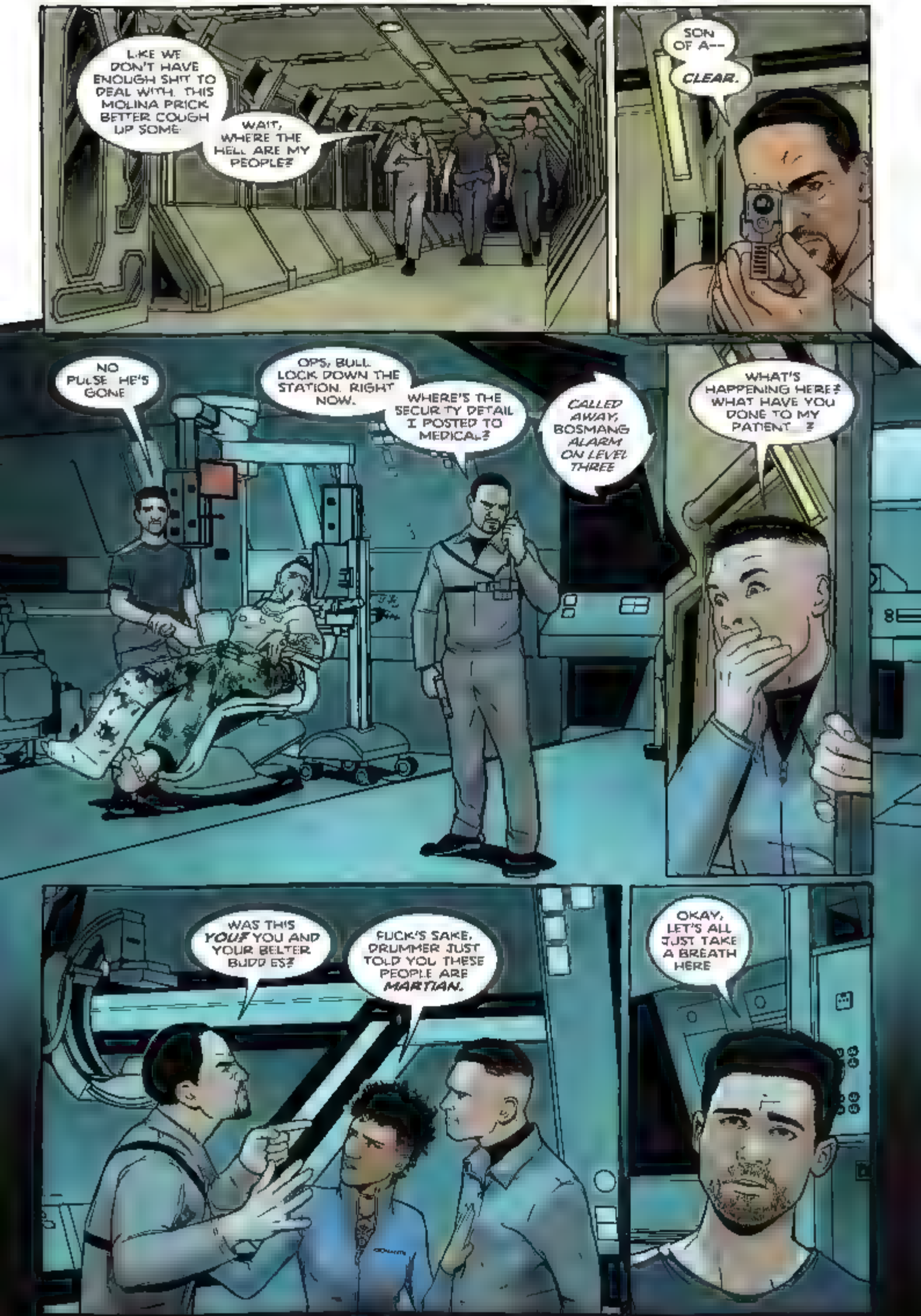
SO THEY GOT OUR COMMS TOO.
BUT IF THE HACK WAS ALREADY UP AND RUNNIN', WHY'S THIS GUY MESSIN' WITH OUR SHIT?
BECAUSE THE LATEST DATA PACKAGE NEVER GOT A CHANCE TO TRANSMIT. AND WHILE WE'RE DOCKED, OUR SYSTEM'S PHYSICALLY HOOKED INTO MEDINA'S
THE PIRATE CODE DOESN'T HAVE ACCESS TO THE HARDLINE. SOMEONE HAD TO BOARD THE ROCI AND GRAB THE DATA MANUALLY.
THIS SOUNDS WAY TOO SOPHISTICATED FOR PIRATES.
WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE? FREE NAVY, RENEGADE OPA...?
NO.
THIS IS *WORSE.*



CHAPTER
FOUR

I SHARED THE *PELLA* DATA WITH EARTH.
AVASARALA CAME THROUGH FOR US. PUT THE PIECES TOGETHER.
WHAT SHE UNCOVERED DATES BACK YEARS—TO A MARTIAN ANTI-PIRACY INITIATIVE CALLED *SILENT WALL*.
THAT'S HARDLY A SECRET. MARS MADE A BIG NOISE ABOUT IT AT THE TIME.
PIRATES WERE STEALING OUR TERRAFORMING SUPPLIES. WE BROUGHT THE HAMMER DOWN.
THAT'S THE HAND THEY WANTED US TO SEE. NOT THE BLADE, HIDDEN IN THE OTHER.
THEY HID A SECOND OP BENEATH *SILENT WALL*. DENIABLE. DEEP BLACK.
MARTIAN SPECIAL FORCES, BORN IN LOW GRAVITY ENVIRONMENTS. TRAINED TO BLEND IN, INFILTRATE, AND DISRUPT BELTER PIRATE NETWORKS.
OPERATION *DRAGON TOOTH*.


DRAGON TOOTH ASSIGNED TWO LIGHT DESTROYERS TO THE DONNAGER BATTLE GROUP
TANTO, DISGUISED AS A BELTER ROCK-HOPPER, AND KUNAI, MODIFIED FOR STEALTH.
WE WERE THE LAST ONES OFF THE DONNAGER BEFORE SHE WENT UP—AND I CAN TELL YOU, THE ONLY SHIPS ABOARD HER WERE OUR SHUTTLE AND THE ROCI.
...WELL, SHE WAS THE TACHI BACK THEN.
EARTH SUSPECTS KUNAI WAS DESTROYED FLEEING THE BOMBING OF THE MARTIAN PARLIAMENT
BUT TANTO? MISSING IN ACTION.
AND IF THEY WERE INVOLVED IN THE ATTACKS ON EARTH AND MARS...
BETTER TO HIDE THAN OUT HERE?
SOLDIERS DISGUISED AS BELTERS.
SOUND LIKE ANYONE WE'VE MET RECENTLY?

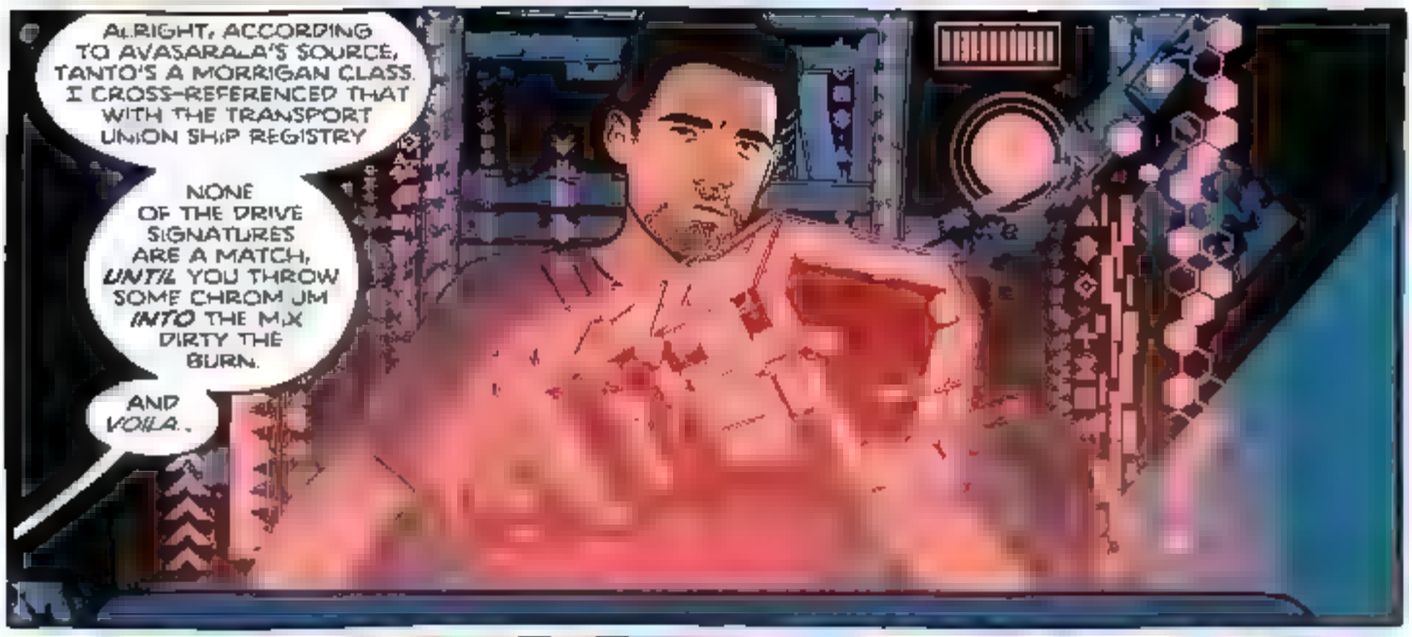

LIKE WE DON'T HAVE ENOUGH SHIT TO DEAL WITH. THIS MOLINA PRICK BETTER COUGH UP SOME.
WAIT, WHERE THE HELL ARE MY PEOPLE?
SON OF A--
CLEAR.
NO PULSE. HE'S GONE
OPS, BULL. LOCK DOWN THE STATION. RIGHT NOW.
WHERE'S THE SECURITY DETAIL I POSTED TO MEDICAL?
CALLED AWAY, BOSMANG ALARM ON LEVEL THREE
WHAT'S HAPPENING HERE? WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO MY PATIENT...?
WAS THIS YOUR YOU AND YOUR BELTER BUDDIES?
FUCK'S SAKE, DRUMMER JUST TOLD YOU THESE PEOPLE ARE MARTIAN.
OKAY, LET'S ALL JUST TAKE A BREATH HERE

I'VE HAD ENOUGH OF THIS. I'M GOING BACK TO THE *ROCI*.
NAGATA--
WHAT.
LISTEN, IT'S SHITTY, BUT YOU KNOW I GOTTA ASK. THE SKIFF, THE COMM BUFFER...
IS YOUR KID MIXED UP IN THIS?
FLIP DIED ON THE *PELLA*.
I KILLED HIM. AND I'M GOING TO HAVE TO LIVE WITH THAT FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE
ARE WE DONE?
ACTUALLY, ONE MORE THING.
YOU WANT NUKES?
YOU GOT 'EM.

SOL SYSTEM
ARES, THE GOD OF WAR, SET A DRAGON TO GUARD HIS SACRED SPRING
ARES THAT'S MARS, RIGHT?
NOT ENTIRELY SURE THAT'S RELEVANT
CADMUS SLEW THE DRAGON
BUT WHEN ITS TEETH WERE SCATTERED ON THE SOIL, THEY SPRANG INTO A HOST OF MIGHTY WARRIORS.
THE SPARTOI.
YOU ARE SUCH A NERD
OUTNUMBERED, AND KNOWING HE COULDN'T DEFEAT THE SPARTOI SINGLE-HANDED, CADMUS THREW A ROCK.
YEAH, THAT NEVER ENDS WELL.

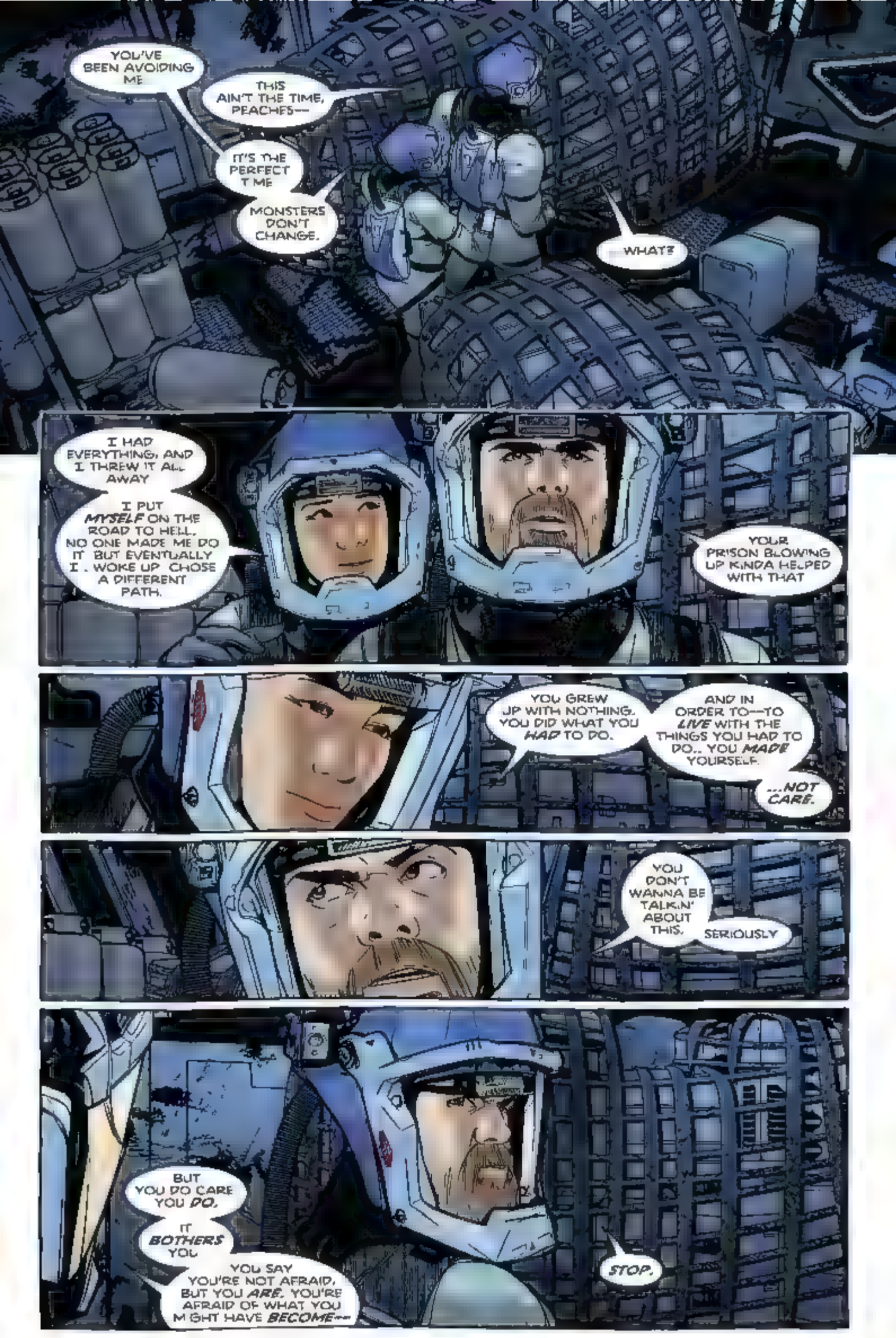
THE SPARTOI ARGUED OVER WHICH OF THEM HAD THROWN THE ROCK. TEMPERS FLARED, AND THEY FOUGHT EACH OTHER—UNTIL ONLY FIVE REMAINED.
CADMUS DEFEATED THEM EASILY.
SOWING DISCORD AMONG THE ENEMY. CLASSIC PSYOP.
DIVIDE, DISORIENT, DEMORALIZE.
NAROS' MESSAGE TO DUARTE.
THROWING ROCKS. SCATTERED DRAGON TEETH.
DONKEY BALLS.
EXACTLY. IT'S ALL CONNECTED.
SOHIRO'S PIRATE FACTION AREN'T PIRATES AT ALL. THEY'RE MARTIAN BLACK OPS. GONE ROGUE.
FOR WHATEVER REASON, THEY GOT LEFT BEHIND WHEN DUARTE CLOSED THE LACONIA GATE. NOW THEY'RE TRAPPED HERE.

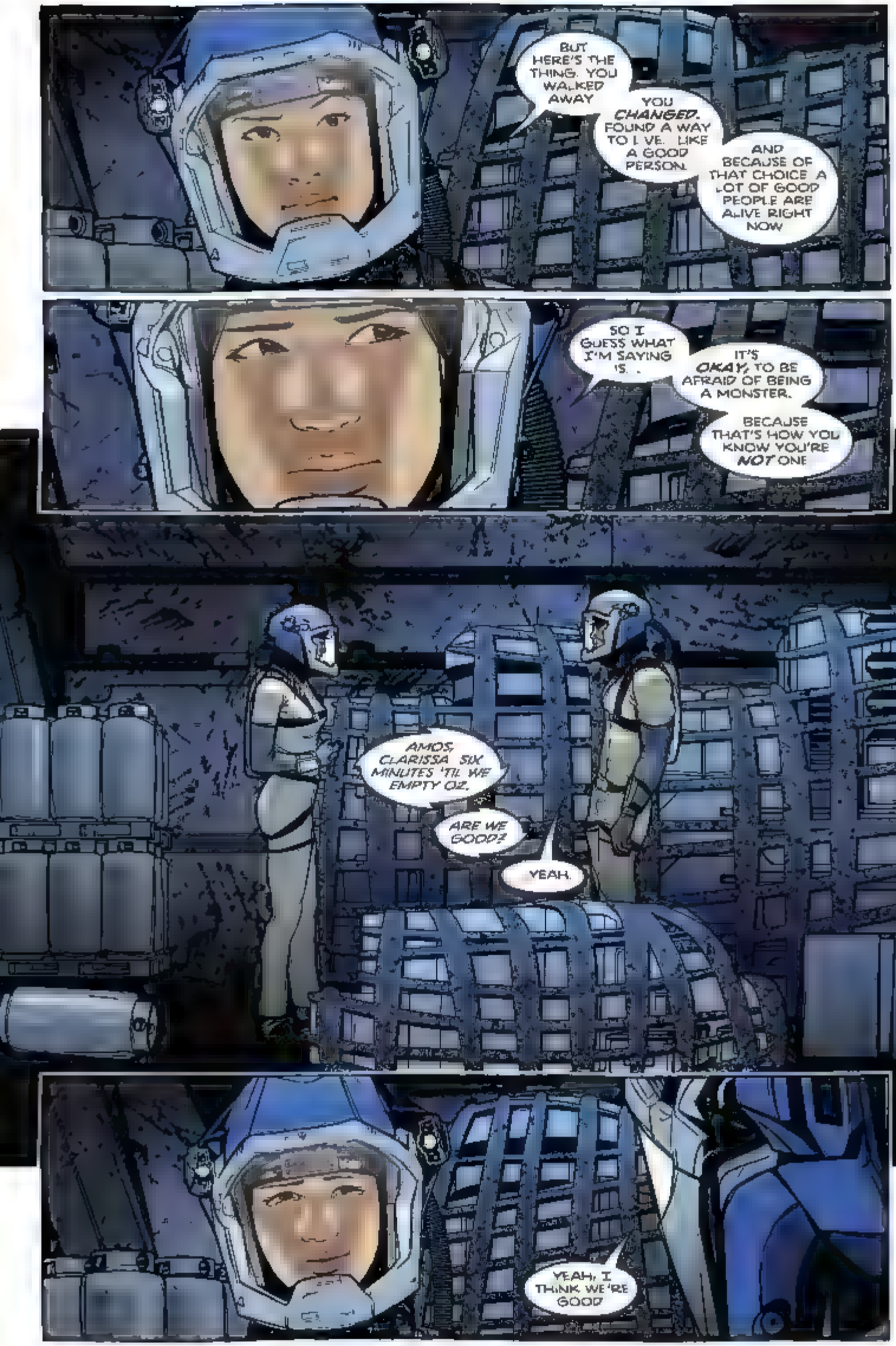
YOU ONTO SOMETHING?
PASHANG YA.
GOT IT.

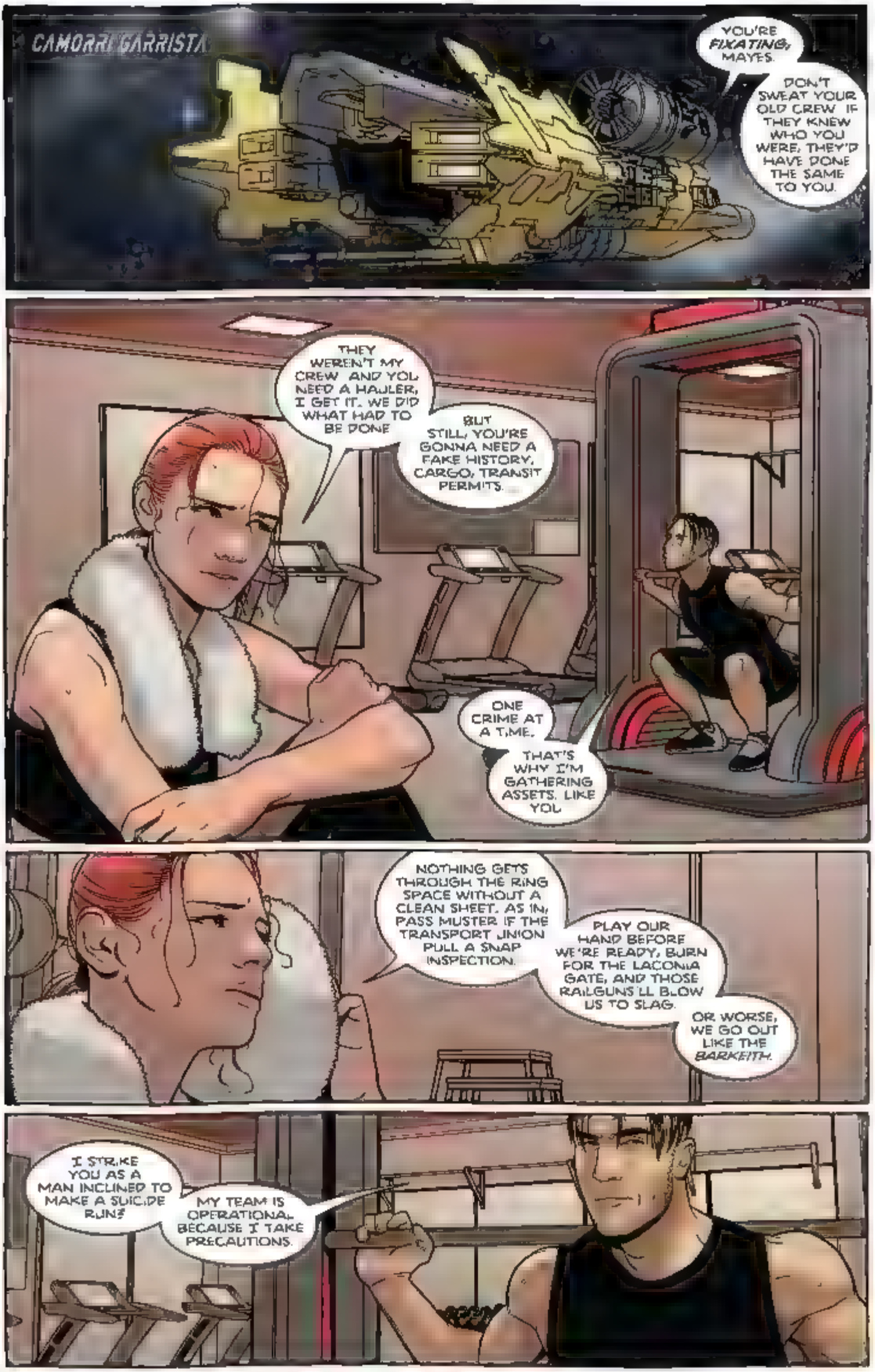

ALRIGHT, ACCORDING TO AVASARALA'S SOURCE, TANTO'S A MORRIGAN CLASS. I CROSS-REFERENCED THAT WITH THE TRANSPORT UNION SHIP REGISTRY
NONE OF THE DRIVE SIGNATURES ARE A MATCH, UNTIL YOU THROW SOME CHROMIUM INTO THE MIX DIRTY THE BURN.
AND VOILA.

I GIVE YOU THE ROCK-HOPPER CAMOUFLAGED GARRISTA.
THEY'VE MODIFIED THE HULL PROFILE, BUT UNDER ALL THAT JUNK, SHE'S A MORRIGAN. I'D BET MY LIFE ON IT

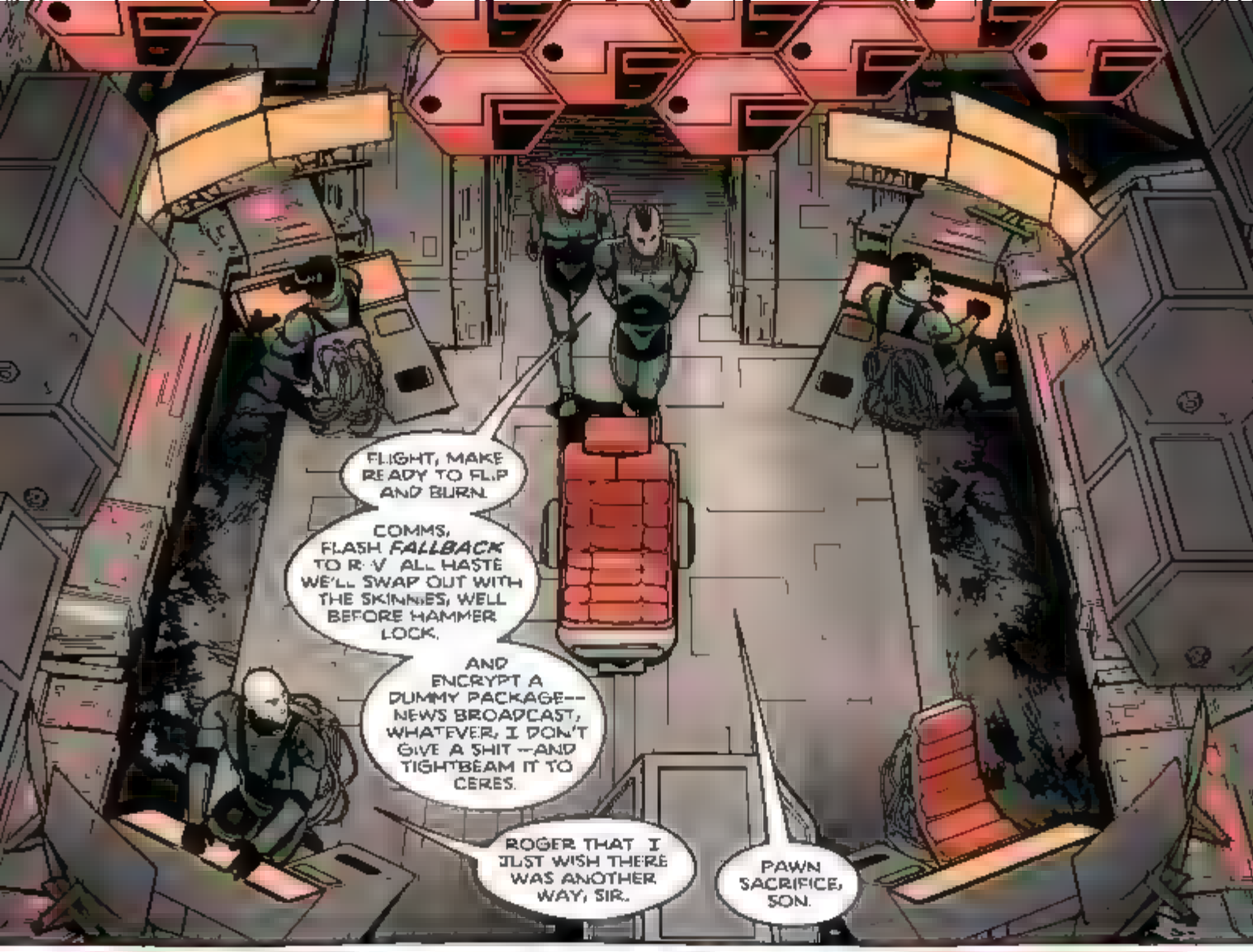
SO THE ROCI'S SISTER SHIP BROKE BAD.
I'LL SPREAD THE WORD. WE'RE MAKING A FAMILY INTERVENTION.

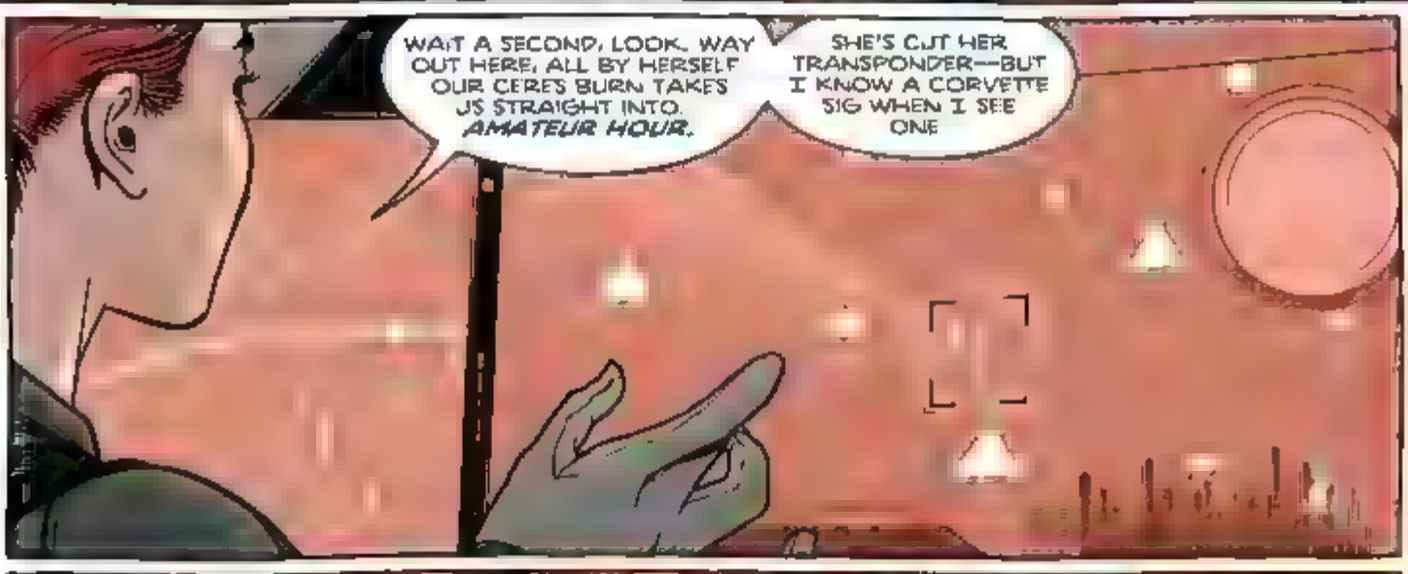

YOU'VE BEEN AVOIDING ME
THIS AIN'T THE TIME, PEACHES--
IT'S THE PERFECT T ME
MONSTERS DON'T CHANGE.
WHAT?
I HAD EVERYTHING, AND I THREW IT ALL AWAY
I PUT MYSELF ON THE ROAD TO HELL. NO ONE MADE ME DO IT BUT EVENTUALLY I . WOKE UP CHOSE A DIFFERENT PATH.
YOUR PRISON BLOWING UP KINDA HELPED WITH THAT
YOU GREW UP WITH NOTHING. YOU DID WHAT YOU HAD TO DO.
AND IN ORDER TO--TO LIVE WITH THE THINGS YOU HAD TO DO.. YOU MADE YOURSELF.
...NOT CARE.
YOU DON'T WANNA BE TALKIN' ABOUT THIS.
SERIOUSLY
BUT YOU DO CARE YOU DO.
IT BOTHERS YOU
YOU SAY YOU'RE NOT AFRAID, BUT YOU ARE. YOU'RE AFRAID OF WHAT YOU MIGHT HAVE BECOME---
STOP.

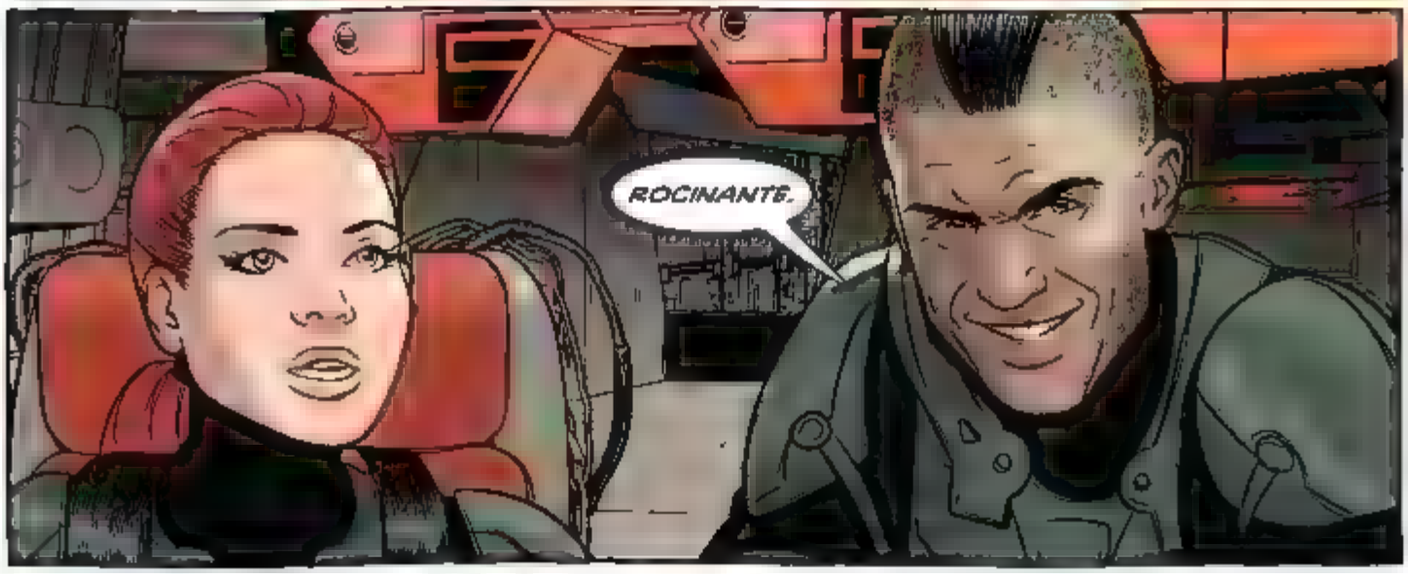

BUT HERE'S THE THING. YOU WALKED AWAY
YOU CHANGED. FOUND A WAY TO LIVE. LIKE A GOOD PERSON.
AND BECAUSE OF THAT CHOICE A LOT OF GOOD PEOPLE ARE ALIVE RIGHT NOW
SO I GUESS WHAT I'M SAYING IS. .
IT'S OKAY, TO BE AFRAID OF BEING A MONSTER.
BECAUSE THAT'S HOW YOU KNOW YOU'RE NOT ONE
AMOS, CLARISSA SIX MINUTES 'TIL WE EMPTY O2.
ARE WE GOOD?
YEAH.
YEAH, I THINK WE'RE GOOD


CAMORRI GARRISON
YOU'RE FIXATING, MAYES.
DON'T SWEAT YOUR OLD CREW. IF THEY KNEW WHO YOU WERE, THEY'D HAVE DONE THE SAME TO YOU.
THEY WEREN'T MY CREW. AND YOU NEED A HAULER, I GET IT. WE DID WHAT HAD TO BE DONE.
BUT STILL, YOU'RE GONNA NEED A FAKE HISTORY, CARGO, TRANSIT PERMITS.
ONE CRIME AT A TIME.
THAT'S WHY I'M GATHERING ASSETS. LIKE YOU.
NOTHING GETS THROUGH THE RING SPACE WITHOUT A CLEAN SHEET. AS IN, PASS MUSTER IF THE TRANSPORT UNION PULL A SNAP INSPECTION.
PLAY OUR HAND BEFORE WE'RE READY, BURN FOR THE LACONIA GATE, AND THOSE RAILGUNS'LL BLOW US TO SLAG.
OR WORSE, WE GO OUT LIKE THE BARKEITH.
I STRIKE YOU AS A MAN INCLINED TO MAKE A SUICIDE RUN?
MY TEAM IS OPERATIONAL BECAUSE I TAKE PRECAUTIONS.

WHAT WE'VE DONE OUT HERE IS CREATE SCARCITY FOR A VITAL RESOURCE THAT WE CONTROL.
NITRATES, FROM ARROKOTH.
THE CON-AM 44 REFINERY? BUT THAT'S WAY OUT IN THE KUIPER BELT—
... SHIT, THAT MAKES SENSE THOUGH. NO FLEET PATROLS SPARSELY POPULATED. EASY TO HIDE
LOGISTICAL WARFARE. THE HIGH CONSUL WOULD APPROVE.
THE REFINERY'S A CLEAN FRONT ARROKOTH'S A PIRATE HAVEN.
THOSE DUMB SKINNIES THINK I'M ONE OF 'EM. WHEN THE TIME COMES, THEY'LL FOLLOW "SOHIRO" INTO THE FIRE
SIR. WE HAVE A SITUATION. OPA HUNT GROUP INBOUND— GATAMANG FERONTE, MOWTENG, TYNAN.
THEY'VE DEMANDED WE CUT DRIVE AND PREPARE TO BE BOARDED
SOUNDS LIKE WE'RE DONE PLAYING DRESS-UP
BATTLE STATIONS.


FLIGHT, MAKE READY TO FLIP AND BURN.
COMMS, FLASH *FALLBACK* TO R-V ALL HASTE WE'LL SWAP OUT WITH THE SKINNIES, WELL BEFORE HAMMER LOCK.
AND ENCRYPT A DUMMY PACKAGE--NEWS BROADCAST, WHATEVER, I DON'T GIVE A SHIT --AND TIGHTBEAM IT TO CERES.
ROGER THAT. I JUST WISH THERE WAS ANOTHER WAY, SIR.
PAWN SACRIFICE, SON.


WAIT A SECOND, LOOK. WAY OUT HERE, ALL BY HERSELF OUR CERES BURN TAKES US STRAIGHT INTO. *AMATEUR HOUR.*
SHE'S CUT HER TRANSPONDER--BUT I KNOW A CORVETTE SIG WHEN I SEE ONE


ROCINANTE.

SHE'S RABBITING BURNING SUNWARD.
HUNTER GROUP'S TOO SPREAD OUT TO INTERCEPT. THEY SHOULDA KEPT THEIR YAP SHUT
THEY DON'T NEED TO CATCH HER. THEY JUST NEED TO *DRIVE* HER—RIGHT INTO US.
MORRIGANS HAVE A PDC BLINDSPOT. IF WE GET INTO CQB, PUT US UNDER THE KEEL
FISH 'N A BARREL.
WEAPONS HOT
CAMORRI GARRISTA— THIS IS THE GUNSHIP ***ROCINANTE,*** EXECUTING A LAWFULLY ISSUED CONTRACT ON BEHALF OF THE TRANSPORT UNION.
POWER DOWN YOUR REACTOR AND PREPARE TO BE BOARDED, OR YOU WILL BE FIRED UPON.
THIS IS YOUR LAST AND ONLY WARNING
WE'RE CLOSE ENOUGH FOR REAL-T ME, BUT NOTHING
WARMING UP THE RAILGUN. WANT ME TO PUT ONE THROUGH HER DRIVE CONE?
SHE'S HEAD-ON TO US IT'D KILL EVERY DECK BEFORE IT HITS THE DRIVE
WE NEED TO BE SURE.
RATE WE'RE CLOSING, WE RE ONLY GETT NG ONE SHOT AT THIS.
ALL DUE RESPECT, CAP, BUT TALKING WON'T CHANGE THAT.

DAMN IT
CAMORRI GARRISTA, I SAY AGAIN—
INCOMING! FAST MOVERS! TWO TORPEDOES—
COMING AT US FROM BEHIND—!
BEHIND?! WHERE THE FUCK DID THEY COME FROM—?!
EVASIVE!
KUNAI
IT'S A STEALTH SHIP! SNUCK UP IN OUR DRIVE SHADOW—
IT'S THE KUNAI!

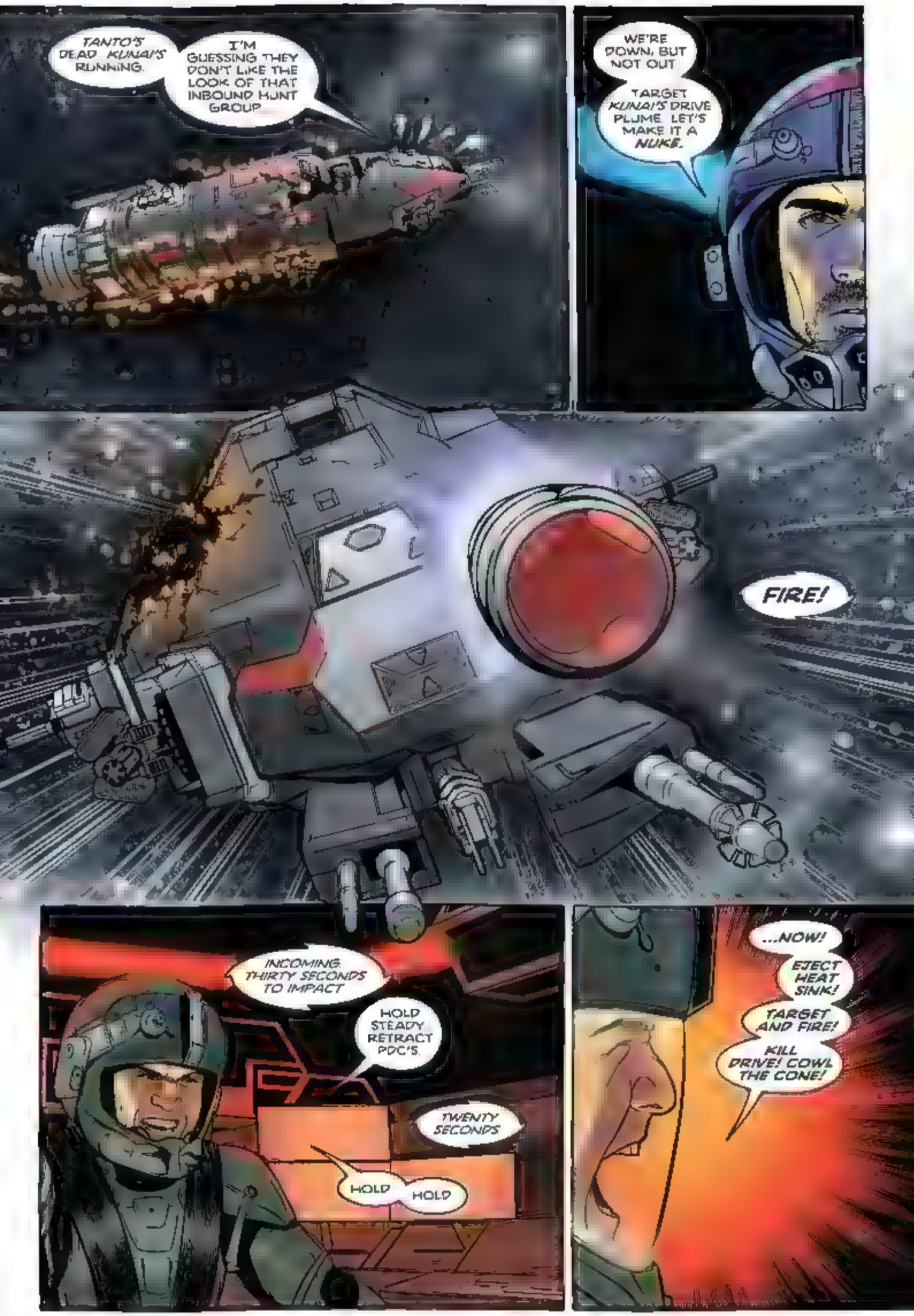
GARRISTA'S FIRING AS WELL! TWO MORE!
HANG ON—!
FREE FIRE! PDCS ON AUTO-TRACK!
C'MON SWEET BABY ROCI—!
SPLASH ONE!
TWO!

OUR PDC'S HAVE STOPPED
DID WE GET ALL FOUR...?
NEGATIVE! KUNAI'S GONE DARK— AND HER TORPEDOES CUT THEIR DRIVES—
OUR PDC'S CAN'T TRACK THEM!
SHIT
STEALTH TORPEDOES!
CAMORRI GARRISTA TANTO
EVASIVE PUT OUR RAILGUN OUT OF POSITION! GARRISTA COMING UP ON US FAST—
PUCKER UP! THIS IS GONNA BE ROUGH—!

SO MUCH FOR THE BLINDSPOT—!
THEY MOUNTED A PDC IN THEIR FUCKING AIRLOCK!
I'VE GOT A REACTOR ALARM!
AMOS, HOW FUCKED ARE WE?
PRETTY FUCKED! WE LOST A SUPERCONDUCTOR! GOTTA SHUT DOWN OR SHE'LL BLOW!
FIX IT! I NEED MAIN DRIVE—OR WE'RE A SITTING DUCK FOR THOSE STEALTH TORPEDOES!

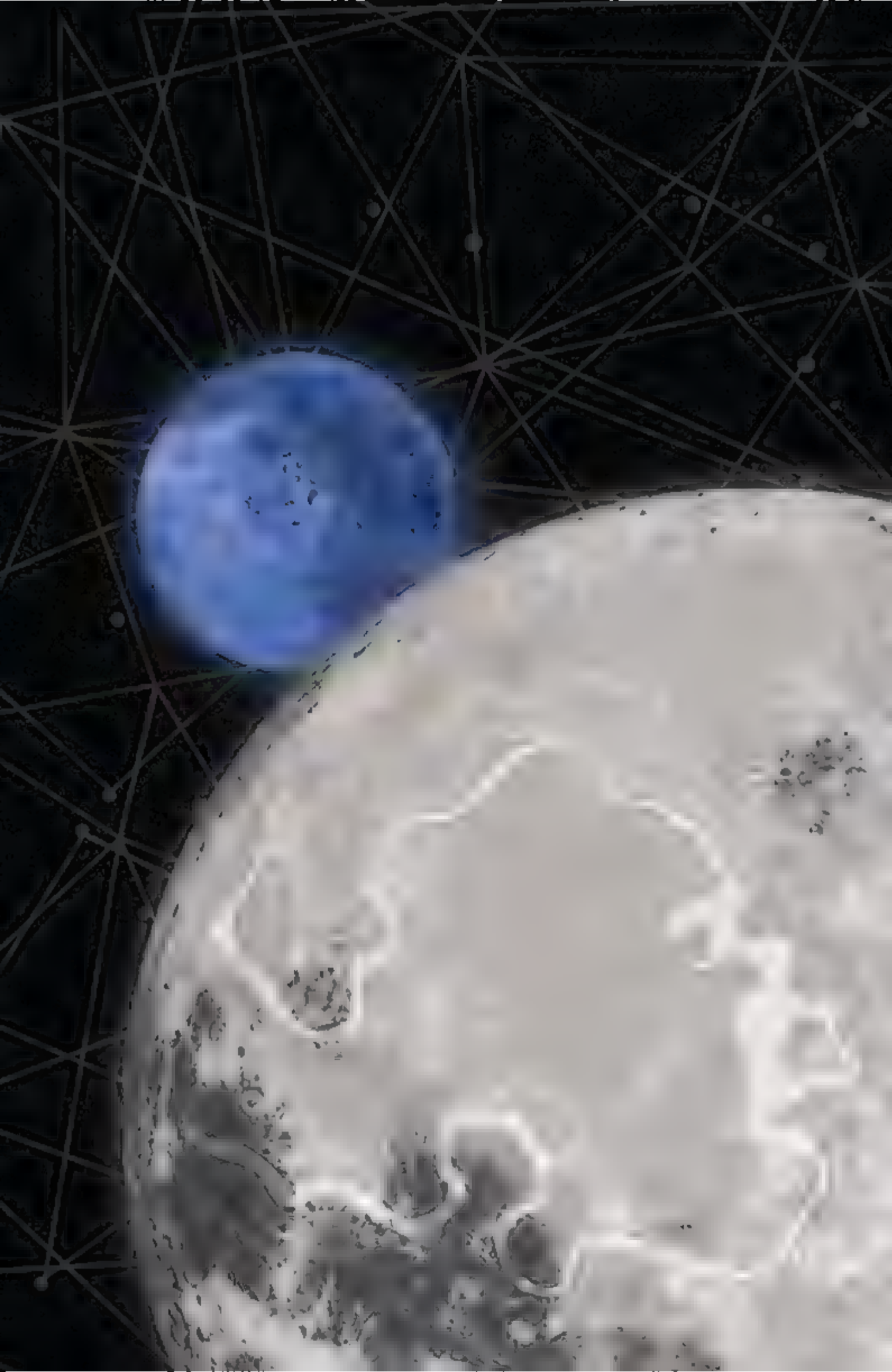
MUST BE SOME KIND OF *THERMAL SHROUD* OVER THE *DRIVES*...
WHICH MEANS THEY'RE MANEUVERING WITH *THRUSTERS* RIGHT NOW—
I'M RECALIBRATING SENSORS! IF WE CAN TARGET REACT ON MASS BURSTS AND [redacted]T—
JUST GIMME SOMETHING I CAN SHOOT!
RE-ACQUIRING—
GOT 'EM!
NO DRIVE? FUCK IT, LET'S BE HONEST —I'M A SHOOTER, NOT A FLYER.
BRACE—!
THAT'S FOR MARS!

KUNAI
SO LONG, SKINNIES
LACONIA APPRECIATES YOUR SACRIFICE
FLIGHT, PUT OUR ASS TO THE ROCINANTE AND OPEN THE DRIVE COWL.
HEADING. FIVE G BURN.
WAIT, THEY'LL SEE US—!
MAN YOUR STATION.
ENGINEERING, STAND BY TO EJECT THE HEAT SINK.
TACTICAL, READY A NUKE. DISABLE RANGE SAFETIES AND PREPARE TO TARGET OUR HEAT SINK, ON MY MARK.
OH, I GET IT
YOU'RE INSANE.
TOLD YOU THEY'D FOLLOW ME INTO THE FIRE
WELCOME TO THE AFTERLIFE


TANTO'S DEAD. KUNAI'S RUNNING.
I'M GUESSING THEY DON'T LIKE THE LOOK OF THAT INBOUND HUNT GROUP.
WE'RE DOWN, BUT NOT OUT
TARGET KUNAI'S DRIVE PLUME. LET'S MAKE IT A NUKE.
FIRE!
INCOMING. THIRTY SECONDS TO IMPACT
HOLD STEADY. RETRACT PDC'S.
TWENTY SECONDS
HOLD
HOLD
...NOW!
EJECT HEAT SINK!
TARGET AND FIRE!
KILL DRIVE! COWL THE CONE!

LOOKS LIKE HER REACTOR WENT UP
NOTHING ON THERMAL BUT AN EXPANDING CLOUD OF HOT METAL AND GAS.
PRICE OF SEDITION, MOTHERFUCKERS.
AMOS, JUST OUT OF INTEREST...ARE WE ABOUT TO EXPLODE?
WORKIN' ON IT. GIVE US A COUPLE DAYS.
THAT, I CAN GIVE YOU.
I KNOW YOU PROBABLY DON'T WANNA HEAR THIS RIGHT NOW, BUT...ACCORDING TO OUR SENSOR LOGS, *TANTO* SENT OFF A TIGHTBEAM BEFORE SHE WENT DOWN.
JUDGING BY THE BACKSCATTER, I'M THINKING..., ***CERES,*** MAYBE?
Y'KNOW WHAT IT SOUNDS LIKE TO ME...?
SOMEONE ELSE'S PROBLEM.

... THEY BOUGHT IT
ALL STATIONS, MAINTAIN SILENT RUNNING. NO ACTIVE, NO THRUSTERS, NO COMMS.
THEY'LL GET BORED SOON ENOUGH, AND GO LOOKING FOR SOMEONE ELSE TO PLAY HERO WITH.
AND WHEN THEY DO, WE'LL SLIP DOWN UNDER THE ECLIPTIC. TAKE THE SLOW ROAD HOME
WITH ARROKOTH AS A FORWARD OPERATING BASE, WE'LL HAVE A CLEAN ROUTE INTO THE HEART OF THE *RING SPACE...*
AND WITH IT, THE GATE TO *LACONIA.*
WE'RE FINALLY GOING TO PHASE TWO— *INFILTRATION.*
AND ALL THANKS TO ONE MAN...
JAMES. FUCKING. HOLDEN.
TO BE CONTINUED



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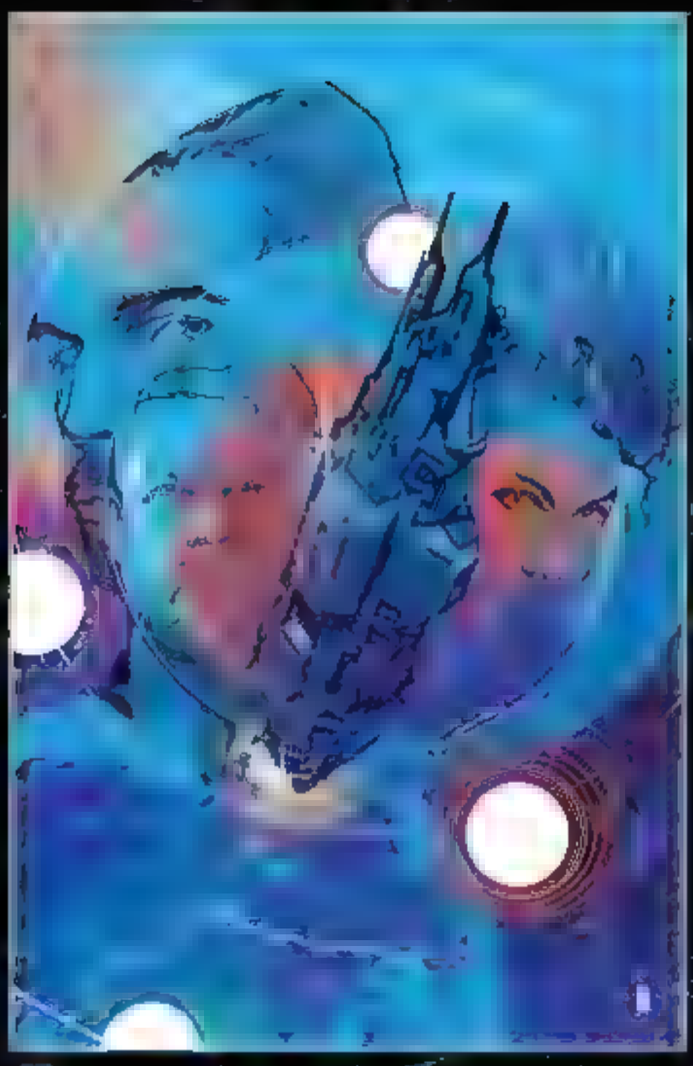

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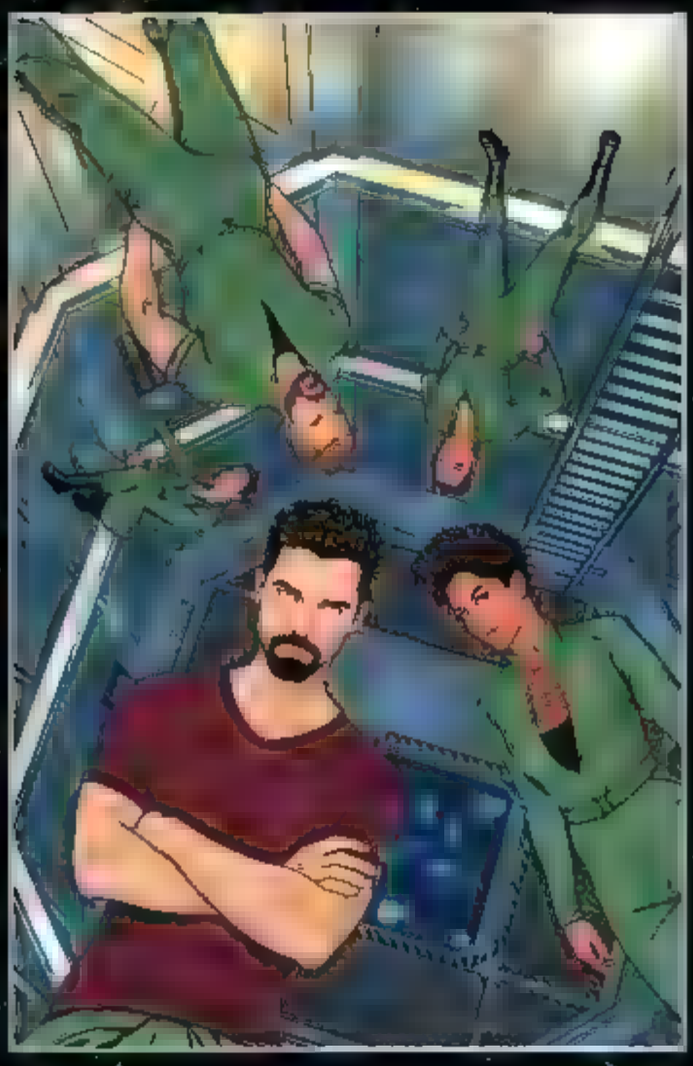

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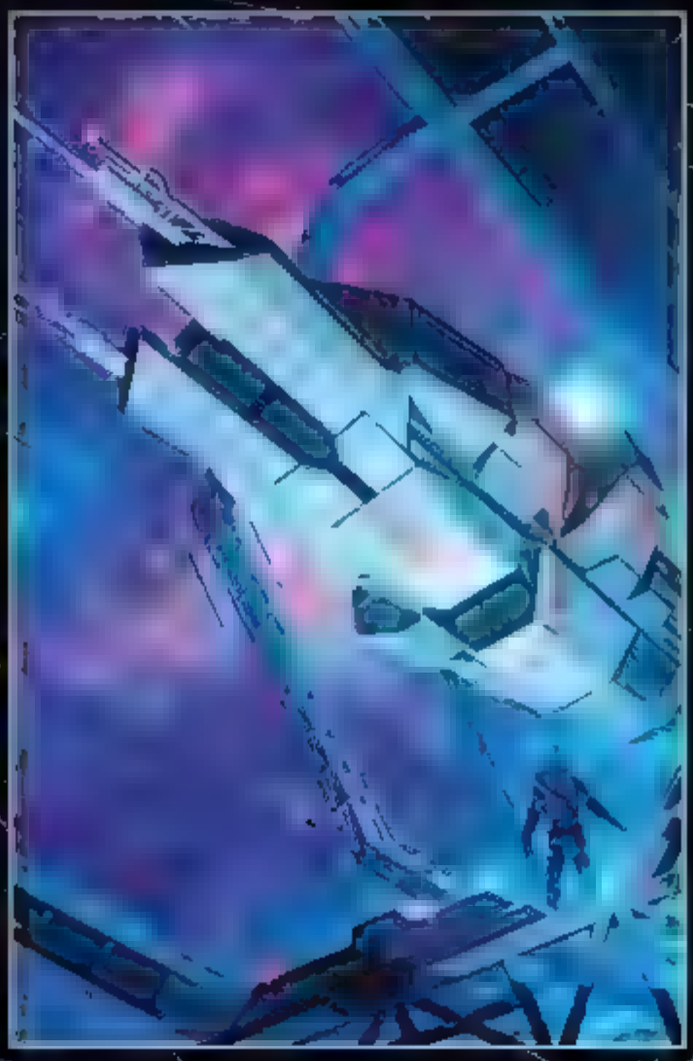

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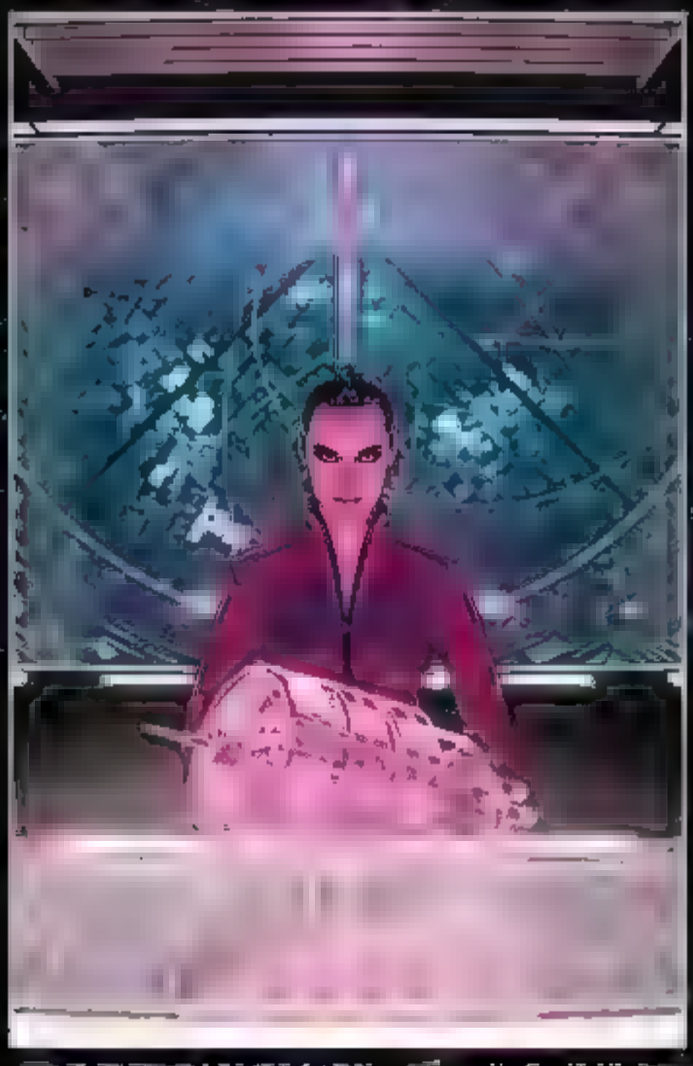

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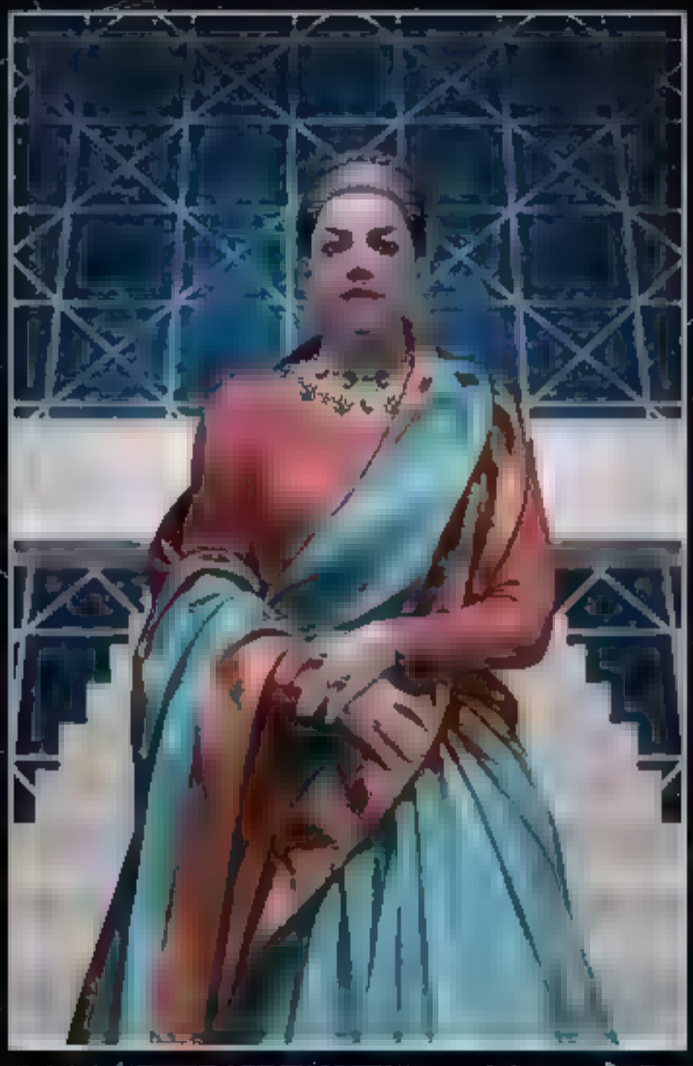

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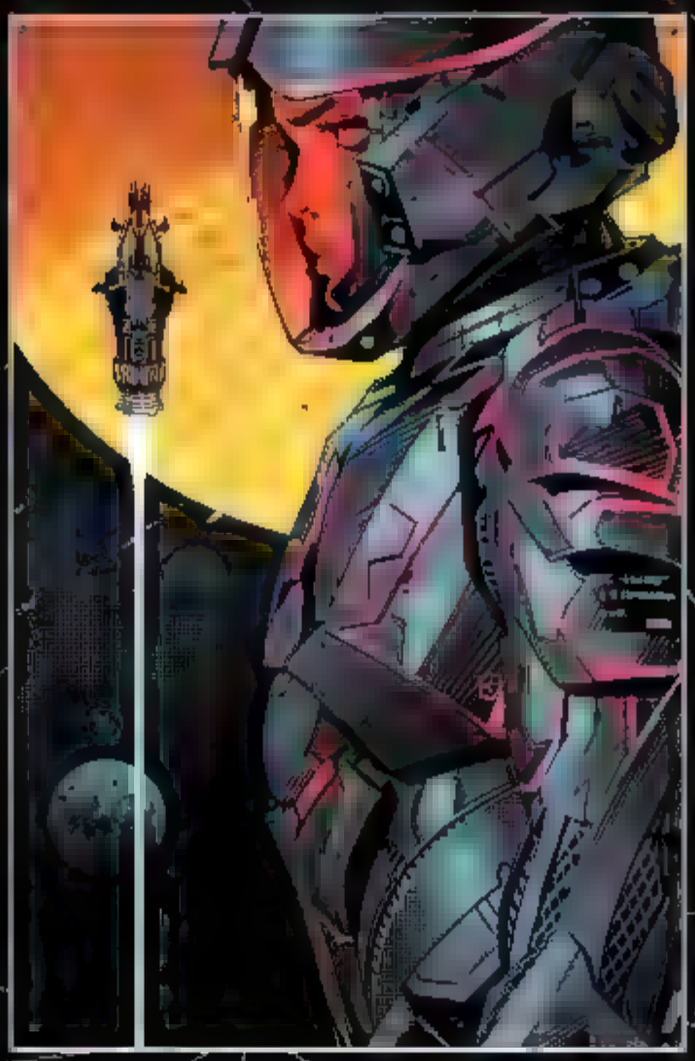

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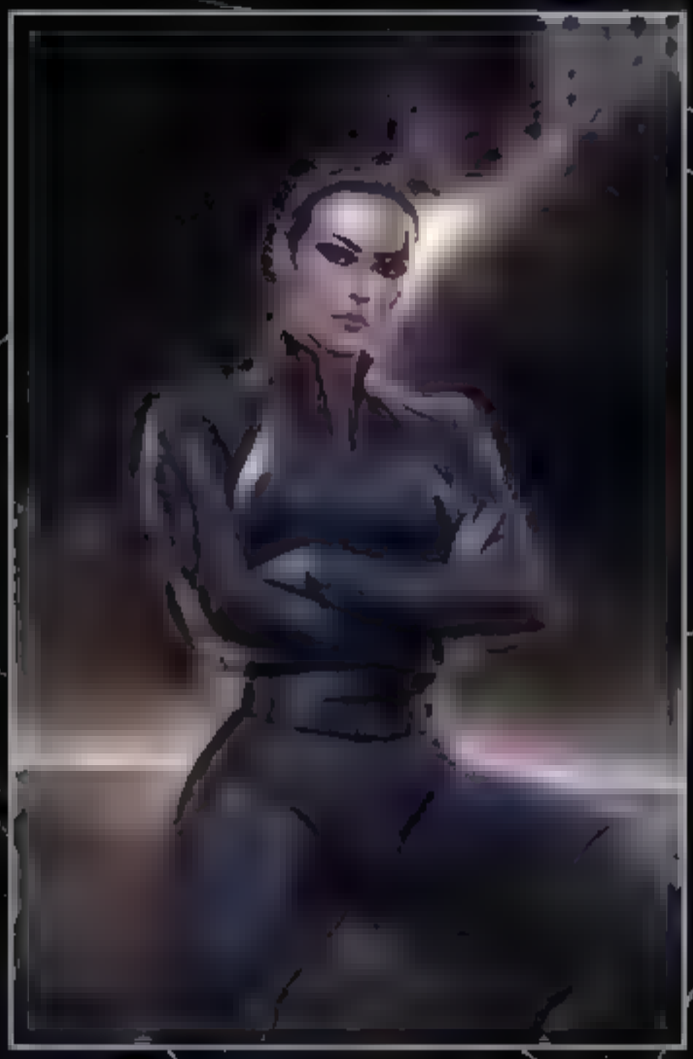

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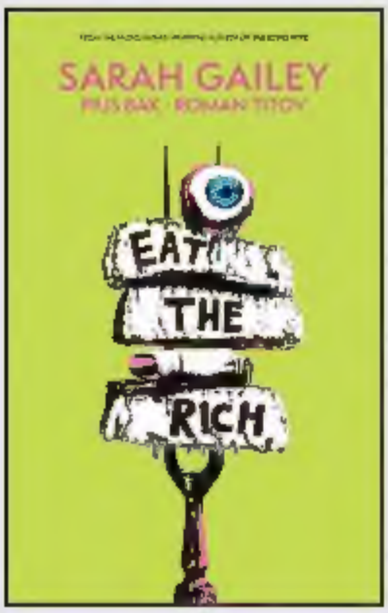

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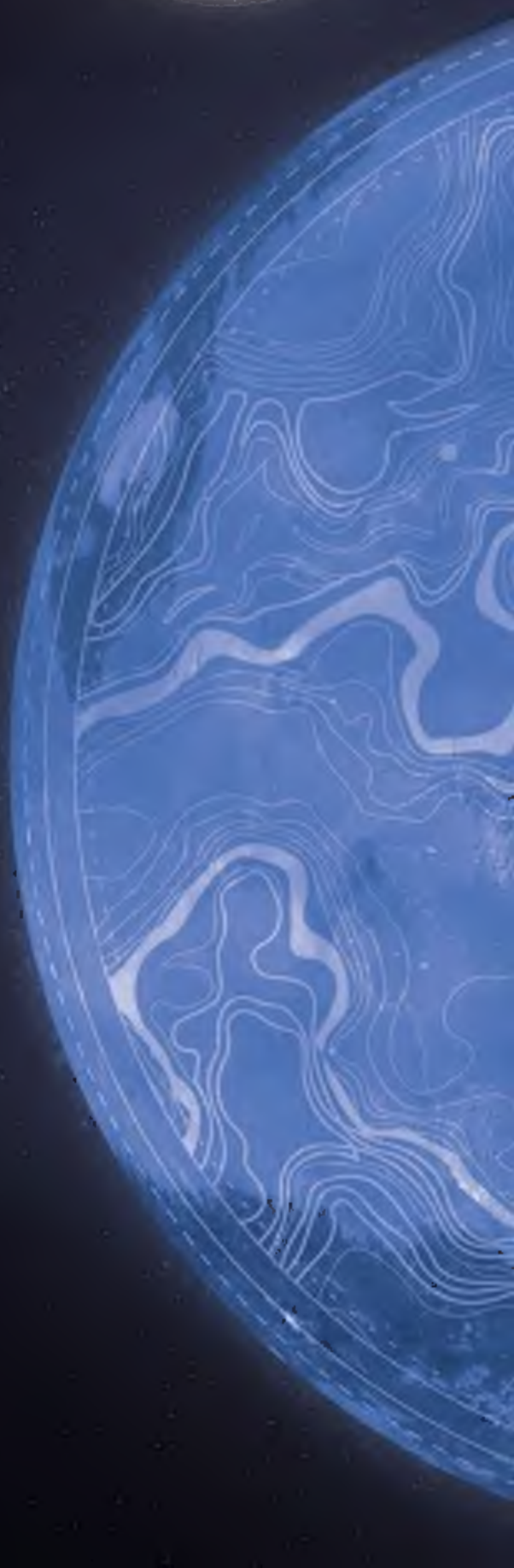

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